COMMONWEAL

$2.00 December 15, 1995

'THE REAL JESUS' • LUKE TIMOTHY JOHNSON

THE EDITORS: BAH, HUMBUG!

REPORTS: POLAND • IRELAND • GERMANY

ABIGAIL McCARTHY: MAKING A LIST

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To the Editors

Farrakhan's a neighbor

Apropos of David R. Carlin, Jr.'s "Why Farrakhan Repels" [November 17]: Of course anti-Semitism is evil and, because of the Holocaust, right-thinking people must recognize that "hate speech" can lead to mass murder. It does not reduce the evil of anti-Semitism, however, to point out that it is but one example (however egregious) of failing to love my neighbor as myself, a violation of the great commandment.

There are many examples of that great sin, among them racism. It is possible that Mr. Farrakhan's focus on "parental responsibility, hard work, self-discipline, and self-reliance" will make a contribution to curing the disease in one area of the body politic.

Surely Mr. Carlin will concede that more blacks will listen to Mr. Farrahkhan than to him. I wish Mr. Farrakhan would renounce his anti-Semitism; I wish rainwater were beer. As a practical matter, in 1995 black people, as a group, are in a great deal more difficulty than Jewish people, as a group; for that reason it is important that we welcome the positive parts of Mr. Farrakhan's message—and Mr. Carlin and I must love this obnoxious neighbor as ourselves.

CHRISTOPHER A. CONROY
Montclair, N.J.

Or was it a Rubicon?

I wasn't going to renew, but the recent change in layout caught my eye. The latest issue I've seen (November 17) is light years ahead of the oatmeal I was dreading every two weeks! I hope that a Tiber (a Hudson?) has been crossed.

I am one of those Lutherans who believe our mission (I hate that word!) is to reform the Roman Catholic church, from which we came. For some of us, "Protestant" is a dirty word. I'm not in sympathy with the "concordat" among Lutherans, Episcopalians, United Church of Christ, and Presbyterians, but I have those "anxieties for all our churches."

Keep it up. Be even-handed, honest, loving, and committed to the *una sancta*.

WINTHROP P. WILCOX, JR., M.D.
Lancaster, Pa.

No help to ministry

In an article ["A Failing Star System," November 17] that does little more than bemoan the reality that liturgical presiders, preachers, and musical ministers have personalities, Thomas Day says nothing that reflects a thoughtful understanding of a challenge that faces many liturgical ministers: How does one effectively help inspire worship while not inspiring undue attention to self? In his ranting, Day is no help to the preacher, for instance, who has a genuine desire to help revitalize a people's faith and also has a speaking ability and a gift of passion for the task.

I would love an article that appreciates the difficult dance it often is in liturgy to lead prayer and preach with zeal while deflecting an assembly's attention to a near and far God. I don't need an article implying that a minister's only real option is to bury the microphone and wear a paper bag over one's head when it comes time to preach or preside.

Day also bemoans the presence of musical soloists who treat liturgy as stage. At one point he praises the tradition of a parish in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in which, he believes, professional choir and orchestra reflect a thriving faith owned by the whole community. I have been to such Masses at this parish and leave the church having experienced a concert with Communion. No encouragement is given the "audience" to join actively in worship. The happy burden of full participation falls to the professional musicians and the priest.

Please, give us an argument that has some inherent consistency, and some bite to its bark.

(REV.) JAMES D. SMITH
Oakdale, Minn.

The people own it

In his recent *Commonweal* article, Thomas Day included a reference to Saint Agnes's church, the parish where I am pastor. Tom is an old acquaintance of mine; we have both been in the church music business for a long time.

The "classical" music that he speaks of at Saint Agnes's has been going on for nearly twenty-five years. We sing thirty Masses a year with members of the Minnesota Orchestra. In addition, our high school has a fine choir that each week sings a Mozart, Schubert, or Bruckner Mass for its school liturgy. As Tom says, our music is "owned" by the whole community.

(MSGR.) RICHARD J. SCHULER
Saint Paul, Minn.

Unserious on liturgy

The set of articles under the heading "Liturgy Matters" [November 17] prompts me to register my disappointment with *Commonweal*'s treatment of matters liturgical. On almost any other topic *Commonweal* subscribers can consistently count on the editors to provide them with in-

(Continued on page 4)

COMING
Contemporary Theology Issue
January 26, 1996

Disputed Questions:
On Infallibility
John T. Ford • Elizabeth Johnson • Margaret O'Gara • Francis X. Murphy • Michael Novak • Joseph A. Komonchak • Lisa Sowle Cahill • John Garvey
On Dissent
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COMMONWEAL

December 15, 1995 / Volume CXXII, Number 22

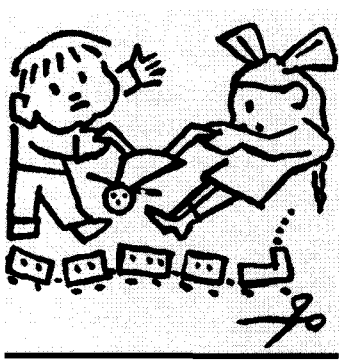
UPFRONT

Correspondence 2

Editorial *Bah, humbug!* 5

COLUMNISTS

Christmas lists
Abigail McCarthy



"Each year I experience pangs of guilt about participating in the national orgy of buying and giving to those who already have so much more than they need. And I feel a halfhearted response to those who lament the loss of the real Christmas story to commercialism...." 6

The earth is flat
John Garvey 7

SHORT TAKES

Is Poland going Communist?
Robert Fleet and Alina Szpak
Trying to avoid former Communists in Poland is like trying to avoid kielbasa. 8

Divorce in a divided land
Mary Pat Kelly
There is more to the Irish "Yes" than a vote for divorce. 9

What Farrakhan left out
Peter Dreier
Working-class solidarity has lots more potential than racial separatism. 10

POETRY

Harvesting the Skeptics
Susannah Sulzman 11

THE LAST WORD

One glance
Denise Blue 25

ARTICLES

WHO IS JESUS?
Luke Timothy Johnson
In confronting the question, some academics tend to neglect the very best sources. 12

AN INCOMPLETE CONFESSION
Gordon Zahn
Kneeling in the box, the German bishops left out part of their history. 15

VERDICTS

SCREEN

Mighty Aphrodite
Goldeneye
Richard Alleva
Woody Allen deftly preaches the gospel of blissful ignorance, and James Bond keeps the Union Jack flying. 17

MEDIA

Frank Sinatra's birthday
Frank McConnell
Our critic pays homage to the quintessential American voice. 18

BOOKS

Fire in the Mind
by George Johnson
Chet Raymo 20

Religion Booknotes
Lawrence S. Cunningham 22

Index to Volume CXXII 26

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(Continued from page 2)
formed, intelligent discussion of issues. On this topic, the editors seem ready to settle for anecdote, caricature, and pique.

John C. Cort's essay, "God Is Not an It," is a case in point. The table of contents commends Cort to us with the note, "Father of ten defends the Father of us all." An interesting theological credential. Cort builds his defense by using an essay of mine, published in the introduction to *Psalms for Morning and Evening Prayer* (Liturgy Training Publications), as the foil for his pique about how the church names and addresses God in its public prayer. Cort is against a "neuter" God and attributes to me designs on neutering the Holy One of Israel whom Jesus called "Abba." Let me assure whomever needs assurance that I am no threat to God.

The theological question is whether God has gender. Specifically: Is God male and so "entitled to a masculine pronoun" on the lips of the praying church? Cort skips that question and simply moves to establish God's entitlement to an English-language "he" by counting words in the Scriptures. After the word counting, the article deteriorates. While the intent may be to expose the stupidity of pastoral liturgists and liturgical scholars of my ilk, the spotlight swings back to expose Cort and *Commonweal*. This is not the best of Catholic thinking.

Fortunately, a wealth of intelligent Catholic theological and pastoral literature on liturgical theology and practice is available for readers outside *Commonweal*'s pages. So how about it, *Commonweal*? I agree with you—and with John C. Cort—that liturgy matters. Since you don't seem to be willing to leave the topic alone, can we subscribers count on you to start promoting serious Catholic conversation about the church's liturgy any time soon?

SR. MARY COLLINS, O.S.B.
Washington, D.C.

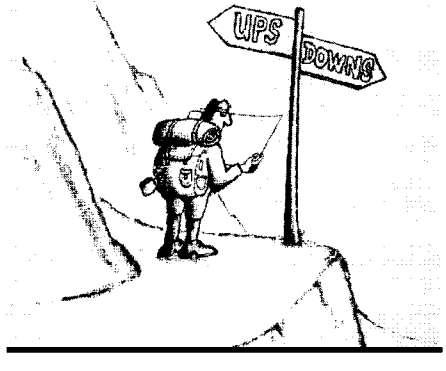
The writer is on the faculty of the School of Religious Studies at The Catholic University of America.

The editors reply:

Actually, the table of contents reference to John C. Cort—"Father of ten defends the Father of us all"—was meant as a light touch, but our correspondent leads us to reflect that multiple fatherhood is truly an interesting theological credential. Any conscientious father of ten has had to explain the mystery of evil, the nature of morality, the "why" of existence (and of rain, snow, headaches...), the dangers of fast driving and early sex, etc., etc., at least a hundred times to each of the ten. Arguably, then, any such father should qualify for at least a licentiate in theology, *honoris et laboris causa*. John C. Cort has other credentials as well: labor organizer, prolific author and speechifier on social ethics, lifelong Mass-goer, and, crowning touch, a former editor of this occasionally infallible magazine.

On the merits: As we read the piece, John C. Cort strongly endorses the fight for inclusive language in church-talk as "a just war," but encounters a stumbling block: the Lord's Prayer, also known as the Our Father, along with trinitarian definitions as well as the many other Gospel references to God as Father by the ultimate theologian.

Our correspondent dismisses this point as mere "word-counting." We tend to think that such seemingly simple questions ("What do we do with the *Pater Noster*?") have a place in this too often contentious discussion. That the answer may be complicated is a given, but clearly the answers given so far by the more absolutist advocates of inclusive language leave many thoughtful people unsatisfied.



On seriousness about the liturgy: Did Sister Mary Collins read our special issue on "Eucharistic Presence" [January 27]? Talk about serious! For that matter, the other contributors to "Liturgy Matters"—Thomas Day, Frederick C. Bauerschmidt, Ralph Thibodeau, Paul Elie, et al.—do not, in our view, deal exclusively in "anecdote, caricature, and pique," but reflect thoughtfully on their own experience as persons in the pew. From the same perspective, we found much to agree with in their critiques. While believing that liturgical scholars have contributed greatly to the renewal of prayer and worship, we think they need to listen to other voices.

Yes, we have a council

In an article in your issue of October 20, Bill Broderick asked your readers, "Does your diocese have a diocesan pastoral council?" In the diocese of Lansing (Michigan) the answer is an emphatic "Yes!"

In 1977, two years after he became our bishop, Kenneth Povish began the process of establishing a council. It started operations as an appointive body in January 1979 and in the following year sponsored the first diocesan assembly, with lay and clerical representatives from each of the approximately one hundred parishes in the diocese. Assembly delegates elected people to replace half the appointed members.

Since that time the council has evolved into an ongoing consultative body with its own bylaws and methods of operation. The bishop is president, *ex officio*. He appoints a nonvoting executive secretary in con-

(Continued on page 24)

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Commonweal, [ISSN 0010-3330] A Review of Public Affairs, Religion, Literature, and the Arts, is published biweekly except Christmas/New Year's; and monthly July and August, by Commonweal Foundation, 15 Dutch St., New York, N.Y., 10038. Telephone: (212) 732-0800. Display advertising correspondence should be sent to Ruth E. Taylor, 11 Graffam Rd., So. Portland, Me. 04106 (207) 799-4387, classified advertising correspondence to 15 Dutch St. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Commonweal, 15 Dutch St. New York, N.Y. 10038.

Commonweal is indexed in Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Catholic Periodical Index, Index of American Periodical Verse, Book Review Digest and Book Review Index. Microfilm from Vol. 1, 1924, to current issues available through University Microfilm, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106 and on Microfiche from Bell & Howell, Wooster, Ohio, 44691. *Commonweal* articles also are available at many libraries and research facilities on CD-ROM and in electronic data bases. Serials Data program No.: ISSN 0010-3330. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional offices. Copyright © 1995 Commonweal Foundation. Single Copy, $2. Yearly subscriptions, U.S., $39; Canada, $41; foreign, $44. Special two-year rate: U.S. $67; Canada, $71; foreign, $77. Surcharge for air mail delivery to Europe, North Africa, Central or South America, $35 per year; for other parts of the world, $44 per year. All Canadian and foreign subscriptions must be paid in U.S. dollars by International Money Order or by check on a U.S. bank.

Illustrations: Cover, Emil Antonucci; pp. 3, 6, 15, 22, 25, Jean Charlot; p. 3, *The Frank Sinatra Reader*, Oxford University Press; p. 4, Cork; p. 17 Schwadron, Rothco. Columnist illustrations, pp. 6, 7, 17, 18, by Elaine Mills.

Bah, humbug!

Anticipating the joys of Christmas, Christians and perhaps many others turn their thoughts to the traditional pleasures of the season: to astonishment that the Lord of all creation was once a babe in a manger; to family reunions and reminiscences; to gift giving and receiving; and especially to the excited presence of children around the tree. From these familiar expectations, we should turn with a similar measure of generosity and warmth to our neighbors and to those less well-off. Yet in that regard, it is likely that the immemorial phrase "there was no place for them in the inn" will carry a deep resonance this year.

As we write, Congress and President Bill Clinton bicker and barter over a budget the Republican majority correctly calls "revolutionary" and the president correctly considers extreme and unfair. Most Americans have yet to come fully to terms with its likely consequences. A consensus exists for balancing the federal budget, reforming welfare, and restraining the growth of government. Still, no workable political consensus has emerged behind the Republican proposal to balance the budget in seven years by cutting an astounding $1 trillion from projected spending. Republicans deserve credit for trying to restrain the rate of growth in entitlements, especially Medicare. Demagoguery is not too strong a word to describe the Democrats' approach to the threat of Medicare cuts. But the Republicans' overall budget, and especially its unnecessary $248 billion tax cut, is being driven by steep cuts in welfare, Medicaid, and other programs benefiting the poor. In other words, the burden of balancing the federal budget has been placed disproportionately on the backs of society's most vulnerable. There really is no place for "them" in the inn, as far as the self-proclaimed Republican "revolutionaries" are concerned, except possibly as stablehands or livestock.

At its annual meeting in November, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops spoke forcefully and in a nonpartisan way about the excesses of the Republican budget as well as the "dangerous blame game" at work in the popular rhetorical assault on the poor. "We believe these debates have fundamental moral dimensions and human consequences," Cardinal William Keeler wrote on behalf of the bishops. "In the welfare, tax, and budget debates, our conference believes that the nation should put poor children and families first....Fiscal restraint and eliminating deficits are necessary, but the weakest members of our society should not bear the greatest burdens" (*Origins*, November 23).

Fair-minded people disagree about welfare reform, the role of the federal government, and the shape of the tax system. But any dispassionate evaluation of the Republican budget reveals a plan weighted heavily to benefit the well-to-do and almost heedlessly cavalier about the likely impact on the poor of shredding an already porous safety net. While spending on the poor makes up roughly 12 percent of the federal budget, those programs will absorb $300 billion, or one-third, of the proposed spending cuts. The cuts include a reduction in the Earned Income Tax Credit, a program designed to keep working people off welfare, one that even Ronald Reagan touted. Drastic cuts in Medicaid and the food stamp program and the abandonment of minimum national standards for welfare benefits are not like-

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ly to be made up for by tax-phobic state governments.

The GOP's $248 billion tax cut is not needed to stimulate the economy; without it the stock market is breaking all records. It has nothing to do with fairness; despite denials, the benefits derived from reductions in capital gains and inheritance taxes would go to wealthier Americans. Even the proposed $500 tax credit for children will not benefit the poorest one-third of American children whose parents don't make enough money to pay taxes.

Should the federal budget be balanced in seven years? Opinions vary. Whatever the truth about the dangers of federal deficit-spending, the American people clearly want it stopped. Fair enough. What is not fair is a budget that compels the largely unrepresented poor to suffer while more secure Americans sacrifice little or nothing.

As the bishops warned, the highly politicized "blame game" that stigmatizes the poor and thereby justifies their neglect is dangerous, inhumane, and unworthy of a great democracy. House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R–Ga.) provided yet another example of the malign influence of such thinking when he blamed the "welfare state" and the "Left" (does it still exist?) for a depraved series of killings last month in Illinois. With enormous dignity, the family of the pregnant welfare mother who had been so brutally killed, implored Gingrich not to exploit their tragedy for political gain. All of us should say Amen to that plea, especially as we give thanks for the birth of a redeemer who was both poor and a scapegoat for the powerful.

OF SEVERAL MINDS

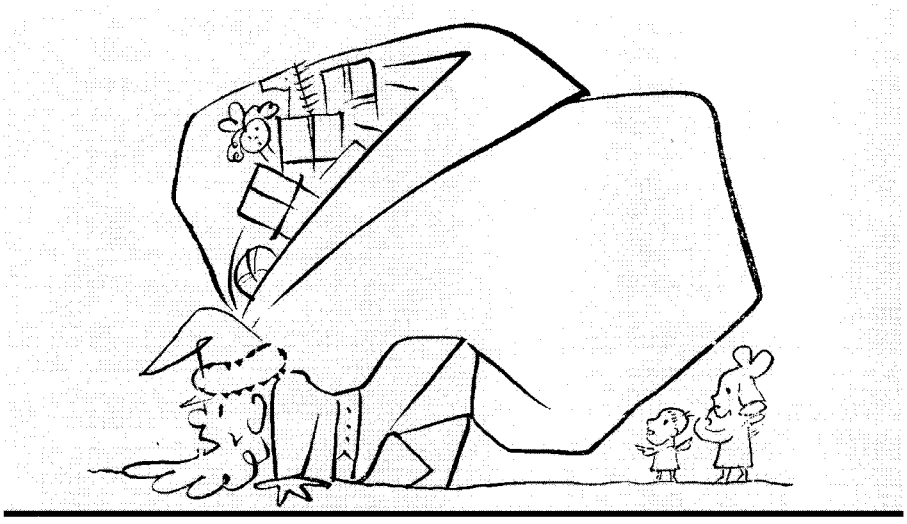
ABIGAIL McCARTHY

CHRISTMAS LISTS

Celebrate wildly & in moderation

Shortly before Thanksgiving this year, my eldest daughter began the annual task of canvassing the family for Christmas lists—the suggestions for their preferred Christmas gifts. These lists are traded so that we can pick out at least one gift each family member would really like to have. Year after year, items on these wish lists tend to be severely practical—driving gloves, turtlenecks, handkerchiefs—but sometimes there are surprises that set us off in earnest search of that one perfect thing.

Although younger family members may not realize it, this family custom goes back at least sixty-five years and has its roots in the Great Depression. For most people in those days there was precious little money for Christmas giving, but the elders in our family were determined that the children not be robbed of Christmas expectations and joy. So the things we really needed and *had* to have—new sweaters, shirts, and socks—appeared under the tree, carefully and colorfully wrapped. And the things we *should* have, as well—books, pens, and writing paper. (We children prepared gifts, too, sure that the gifts we made—felt pen-wipers and napkin rings cut from cardboard tubes and covered—were just what our elders wanted and needed.) The pleasure, however, was in the unwrapping and the discovery of the gift and the giver. The joy was in the giving and the receiving.



We unwrapped carefully and saved the paper, just as we picked the tinsel carefully from the tree and saved it for the next year. Old habits die hard, and it was only a few years ago that younger family members firmly took the used wrappings away from those of us now the elders, and convinced us that it was all right to throw them away.

The great explosion of consumerism occurred, of course, between the Christmases of my childhood and the Christmases of my children and grandchildren. So each year I experience pangs of guilt about participating in the national orgy of buying and giving to those who already have so much more than they need. And I feel a halfhearted response to those who lament the loss of the real Christmas story to commercialism, and who launch efforts to "put Christ back into Christmas." But I argued this out with myself a few years ago as follows, and I think the conclusion I reached then still holds true:

All over the country the pre-Christmas rituals go on: sacred music concerts in cathedrals, ballet and pageants, bell-ringing Santas on the streets, shops laden with Christmas gifts. What exactly are we celebrating? A season of feasting, fun, and frolic? The greatest retail quarter of the year?

Those are not idle questions. Con-

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troversy swirls around Christmas and its celebrations. To the distress of many Christians, the original "Christ-mass," the birthday of Jesus, is waning from public view. Class-action suits abound protesting Nativity scenes on public ground and specifically Christmas music in school and community Christmas programs. One Virginia town, for instance, trying to respond to the American Civil Liberties Union, removed all religious references from its annual Christmas program. Out went the Nativity scene enacted by preschoolers and the Christmas message from the town's clergy. Out, too, went carols with any religious wording. "Silent Night" and "Joy to the World" were replaced by "O Christmas Tree" and "Frosty the Snowman."

In response, the choral society refused to take part in the altered program, partly on the grounds that Christmas music is part of our artistic heritage. And a rally of citizens met in front of the community center to sing traditional carols and hear the Christmas message in a counter program. In a pluralistic society, it is clearly difficult to strike a happy medium between the secular and the sacred, between believers and nonbelievers, but we have to try.

As for commercialization, it might be well to look at things more historically. Christmas was never a purely religious festival. Christians began celebrating it only in the fourth century. Even then it was primarily a "baptizing" of the prevailing pagan celebrations of the winter solstice. In pre-Christian Rome, houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and children and the poor were treated to midwinter presents. As Christianity spread, Christians linked such customs to their observance of the birth of Christ. Christians, in fact, became so merry that, in time, the religious aspect was overwhelmed by bouts of carousing and ribaldry, as Shakespeare's plays, among other testimonies, bear witness. In reaction, the Puritans banned Christmas entirely. Its celebration became illegal.

In this country, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Christmas celebrations shook free of Puritan restraints, becoming generally popular and public again, and, alas, according to historians, commercialized.

Yet, to those who yearn to "put Christ back into Christmas," and to those offended by commercialism, I want to say that all is not entirely awry. I think of the skycap who, as he helped me recently at a New York airport, called my attention to a Christmas tree. "Pretty, huh?" he said. "See, we have Christmas right here." The tree in that commercial space had made him happy.

So it is, I think, that although increasingly controversial and commercial, our commemorations of the historic birth bring to the hearts of many a joyful noise, a sound still connected in some subterranean, mysterious way, to the good news of that first Christmas. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS

JOHN GARVEY

THE EARTH IS FLAT

My textbook says so

Education is a battleground these days. Public schools are widely and for the most part rightly seen, at least in some large urban areas, as disasters. The blame falls on the wider culture, the teachers' unions, the demands placed on public schools as the courts of last resort when all other social institutions have collapsed, and all of this complaining has some basis in fact.

Today's lesson has to do with the texts. Teachers work with what they are given, and often have little choice about the texts they must use to teach children about everything ranging from the American civil rights movement to world history. It is one thing to have to deal with the culture of the inner city, the effect of failed families, etc.—but when the text itself is simply false, what do you do? I encountered an interesting example of a truly terrible text recently. It has to do with my religion and a child in our parish. I know that parents have complained for years about the fact that some texts will not, for example, mention the fact that Martin Luther King, Jr., was a Christian minister, that religion is slighted in the texts our children must read and pass tests on. What do you do when information is not merely missing, which is bad enough, but downright wrong?

Years ago, the Peanuts comic strip had a wonderful series in which Lucy held forth with great authority about subjects upon which she was absolutely incompetent. At one point she made a smug point of informing the otherwise ignorant, "The palm tree is so named because the palm of the ordinary human hand can fit snugly around the trunk of the tree"—this said with absolute assurance. I had a teacher like that once, a religious brother who said things like, "the British pound, which is currently worth about twenty dollars...." It was amusing then. At least it wasn't in any text we had to deal with, and we knew he was nuts.

A girl in our parish was presented with a text that misrepresented her Eastern Orthodox belief. She mentioned the errors to her teacher, who didn't take the problem seriously, so she showed it to me. Here is what it said:

"At the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451, Pope Leo I decreed that Jesus, although one person, had two natures. This doctrine did not satisfy the religious leaders of the Eastern Orthodox church. Not only did they disagree with the doctrine, they also did not like the fact that the Roman pope had decided for them.

"The second religious disagreement had to do with the question of whether or not images, or pictures and statues, were to be allowed in church. The East-

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ern church opposed the use of images. The Western church believed that images were essential in helping people to imagine the divine. The controversy raged through the papacy of Leo III. Like the Monophysite controversy, it was never fully resolved, and it contributed to the permanent separation of the Eastern and Western churches in 1054.

"This division, or schism, between the churches was political as well as religious....The patriarchs, or religious leaders of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, were unwilling to recognize the decision of Leo I in the controversy over the nature of Jesus. They were also unwilling to recognize the decision of Leo III on the nature of the use of images in church..." (*The Pageant of World History*, by Gerald Leinward, published by Prentice Hall).

Just about everything is wrong here—not oversimplified, or even distorted, but plain wrong. It is such knuckleheaded stuff that if it showed up on a high school or college history test as an answer, you'd fail the student.

The use of images was not particularly controversial in the West; in the East, the Orthodox were, of course, entirely on the side of the use of images in worship (where do all those icons come from, if we are so dead set against them?) and celebrate the victory of Orthodoxy over the iconoclasts every year, on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. Papal decisions weren't really part of this controversy. With regard to Leo and Chalcedon, the Orthodox not only accepted Leo's dogmatic formulation—not because he was a pope who had decided for them, but because it reflected their own faith—but even said, "Peter has spoken through the mouth of Leo." There seems to be a confusion here of Orthodoxy with Monophysitism. In any case, it misrepresents Orthodoxy as drastically as Protestantism would be misrepresented if Protestants were said to have based their protest on the grounds that Rome took the Bible too seriously, or Catholicism would be misrepresented if Catholics were said to be people who worship the pope instead of Jesus.

But something is encouraging here. The good news is that most important aspects of education don't happen in school. The girl in my parish was able to recognize the text as false because, at home and in church, she had learned something about her faith. Her kind of literacy matters more than what schools teach. I have always thought home schooling was beginning to make more sense than sending kids to public schools; in some sense home schooling happens, even when the kids go to public schools, and my parishioner has learned a valuable lesson: don't always, or even usually, believe what your teachers tell you. □

Robert Fleet & Alina Szpak

IS POLAND GOING COMMUNIST?

Walesa's time was past

The inconceivable occurred in Poland last month: an ex-Communist won the presidential election. Aleksander Kwasniewski, a former party official, defeated incumbent president Lech Walesa, the Nobel-prize winner, hero of the Solidarity movement, and symbol of Poland's victory over Soviet oppression. Kwasniewski, who previously led a majority coalition of farmers, socialists, and former Communists in the Polish parliament, will now preside over the government.

Predictably, conservative U.S. congressmen announced that democracy in Eastern Europe was threatened. But such pronouncements ignore a great ironic truth about the end of communism in Poland: to a remarkable extent, the Communists gave Poland its freedom, not Solidarity.

Not surprisingly, Poland's Communist governments used political freedom as a carrot or stick to reward the congenial or punish troublemakers. But Poland was never like the Soviet Union: even its Commie honchos were *Poles* first. Much to the Soviets' chagrin, most party members were Roman Catholics as well, including Kwasniewski. Ironically, Solidarity was considered a threat in 1980 because its workers' movement was more Marxist than the government it challenged. U.S. press reports usually ignored that complication, along with the fact, which has recently come to light, that Solidarity received funds from the CIA, Mossad, *and* the KGB.

Traditionally Western-oriented, Poland was never as closed off by the Iron Curtain as other East bloc countries. Certainly *realpolitik* dictated kowtowing to the Soviets. Still, Poland in the 1970s was strongly influenced by the U.S. policy of *détente*. Indeed, *détente* contributed to a rift within the party elite. Communist party leader Edward Gierek favored Western trade alliances. A sizable pro-East faction within the party opposed such policies. It was during this time that a "faithful Communist" (to quote the *Los Angeles Times*) such as Kwasniewski can be seen entering the picture.

It was commonplace in the 1970s for students destined to become Poland's future Communist party leaders to also be self-conscious reformers. At that time, the emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev and the Soviet Union's peaceful demise were inconceivable. Students who seriously wanted reform saw only one direction to take: join the party. But whether they supported the party or opposed it, most of these future leaders were friends. It was only the old Polish dilemma of choosing between idealism and pragmatism that divided them. (Polish history is full of beautiful martyrs.)

When the Solidarity movement emerged from the Gdansk shipyard strike, the anti-party intelligentsia headed by Jacek Kuron organized workers behind Lech Walesa. It was an uneasy alliance from the start, one that now seems irretrievably broken. Walesa, after all, is a man who boasts of never reading a book. Still, whatever the initial strength of Walesa and the Solidarity movement, one reason Solidarity

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was not crushed immediately by the government was that party reformists pushed first for an internal house cleaning. With the blessing of Solidarity's leadership, General Wojciech Jaruzelski was asked to head the government. Known for his "clean hands," Jaruzelski had protected Polish workers in an earlier, 1972 strike.

Military men make military decisions. In 1981 Jaruzelski declared martial law in reaction to a threatened Soviet "peacekeeping" invasion and the inability of Solidarity to end strikes that were grinding the economy to a halt. Soon—*before* Gorbachev—Jaruzelski's reformers began moving Poland toward Sweden-styled socialist democracy. In 1984 the U.S. trade attaché in Warsaw advised us: "The business environment is better than ever before." By 1985 our company made a movie for CBS in coproduction with a semi-privatized Polish film studio. Young Communist bureaucrats, eager for change, were trying to revamp the system. Long before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Jaruzelski's government set up the apparatus for free elections which included a "Round Table" group in which Kwasniewski played a central role.

In this context, it is worth noting that during the fall election campaign, Walesa threatened to dissolve the freely elected Polish parliament (*Sejm*) and consolidate its power in the presidency. Walesa boasted that he was not bound by his oath to uphold the Polish constitution because he had not bothered to read it. By contrast, Kwasniewski campaigned on the promise to respect the reforms of the past few years, work with the *Sejm*, and to accept a Walesa-backed *concordat* with the Vatican as long as it was negotiated openly and approved by the *Sejm*.

The final days of the presidential race resembled not so much a choice between freedom and communism as "politics as usual." Investigations revealed that Kwasniewski's wife made a small fortune in questionable stock investments and that Walesa "misplaced" at least a half million dollars to avoid taxes. Both men have friends in the Polish judiciary, and were reprimanded for "unethical but legal" activities. Sound familiar? If anyone in the West doubts that capitalism is firmly entrenched in Poland, these disappointing revelations should set their minds at ease. Sadly, Poland does not now have a Vaclav Havel to help extend the moral horizon of public discourse.

More worrisome was the role the Roman Catholic church played in the elections. John Paul II carefully distanced himself from Walesa when the presidential candidate visited Italy in October. But despite Vatican advice to remain neutral, Cardinal Jozef Gemp, primate of Poland, declared Kwasniewski a "neopagan" and allowed an episcopal letter advocating a "Christian values" vote for Walesa. Bishop Roman Andrzejewski went further, sending the priests of his diocese on a door-to-door "observation" campaign on election day to intimidate pro-Kwasniewski voters. In a bizarre perversion of Catholic values, Radio Maryja, headed by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, began a campaign accusing Kwasniewski of being less than Polish because his mother was a Jew who was dead and buried in a Jewish cemetery. She was neither, but stress induced by the anti-Semitic radio campaign may have contributed to her subsequent fatal stroke. She was buried in the Catholic cemetery by her parish priest.

Politics in a free society is a rough game and requires a solidly entrenched set of democratic values. To Poland's credit, her people appear to be able to survive the buffeting, even if they are only a few years into an uneasy immersion in democracy. On the day after his defeat, Walesa claimed that he would not relinquish power to Kwasniewski. That was an empty threat. The Polish public seems willing to give the winner a chance, and Americans should do the same . The Poles are evidently prepared to put the cold war behind and allow Kwasniewski the opportunity to prove that a freely elected president, even an "ex-Communist," can lead his country in a manner that respects the rights of all its citizens. □

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Mary Pat Kelly

DIVORCE IN A DIVIDED LAND

The Irish debate their past & future

The November 24 referendum in the Irish Republic may have been as much a question about Irish identity as about the legalization of divorce. Many of the purported legal issues—including land inheritance, which set rural Ireland so solidly against the issue in a previous referendum that met defeat in 1986—had been more or less spelled out in the Judicial Separation Act of 1986 and succeeding pieces of legislation.

During this campaign other anxieties came to the fore, fanned by a campaign full of American-style ads and sound bites: Abandoned children stood behind the slogan, "Hello Divorce. Bye, Bye Daddy." A billboard featured a distraught young woman and her family; it asked: "Will you destroy your daughter's marriage?" There was the ubiquitous threat, "You Will Pay!" a reference to the unsubstantiated claim that taxes would increase by 10 percent to support the victims of divorce. And in an unusual but pernicious bit of anti-Semitism, a member of one of Ireland's smaller political parties questioned whether the Minister for Equality and Law Reform, Mervyn Taylor, who is Jewish, should be framing laws governing Christian marriage. The *Sunday Tribune* reported that during the vote count, Una Bean Mhic Mathuna, a "No" supporter, shouted at Frances Fitzgerald, a member

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of parliament, "Ye're only a sharer of wife-swapping sodomites." She went on to complain: "My rights are not protected, but you can go back to your money-bags husband."

The only real change voted in the referendum allowed divorce and civil remarriage after four years of separation. "Second relationships" are not uncommon in Ireland, nor are they secret. Some people simply live with their new partner. Others, often the well-off, travel abroad, set up residency, and file for divorce. Valid foreign divorces are recognized in Ireland and the parties can remarry civilly back in Ireland. In fact, until 1986, men who emigrated to England could divorce their wives at home without the woman's consent.

The "Yes" vote (50.3 percent) was in varying degrees an effort to come to terms with this past and these inequities as well as to represent Ireland's view of herself as a partner in the New Europe. Though the Catholic bishops supported a "No" vote, they said that Catholics should vote according to their conscience. There were letters from the pope and Mother Teresa opposing; Bishop Thomas Flynn of Achonry said divorced Catholics who remarried could not receive the sacraments, including the last rites. When other churchmen demurred, he modified his statement.

This year begins the commemoration of the Great Hunger that decimated Ireland 150 years ago. Many have argued that the Irish people are only now able to acknowledge what the loss of 1.5 million dead and another million who emigrated between 1845 and 1850 meant to those who survived or remained. This year also marks the second year of peace in the North and the hope to an end of the centuries-old quarrel where religion was made a badge of difference. Of course, divorce and remarriage have been legal in the North and no one has found a qualitative difference among Catholics on this question.

Divorce is a hard reality for any family to face, and sometimes Ireland seems like a big extended family where the view persists that what you don't speak of isn't true. Ireland has now talked about broken marriages and divorce. □

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Peter Dreier

WHAT FARRAKHAN LEFT OUT

Labor solidarity or racial separatism?

Leaders of organized labor were conspicuously absent from last October's Million Man March. Louis Farrakhan's conservative rhetoric of economic individualism and racial separatism doesn't square with the labor movement's message of class solidarity and racial cooperation. Undoubtedly, however, a significant number of the marchers were union members: Twenty-six percent of black men are unionists.

Beginning with the Depression, civil rights leaders—including A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jesse Jackson—have recognized that unions and African-Americans share a common agenda. In their view, appeals to racial pride, without a larger vision of economic justice that cuts across racial divisions, are a dead end. Randolph, the founder of the first black trade union (the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters), mobilized civil rights activists during World War II to push the federal government to integrate defense plants and the army. The 1963 March on Washington—famous for King's "I Have a Dream" speech—was Randolph's idea. The labor movement, especially the United Auto Workers, played a key role in organizing and funding the march, and in exerting pressure to enact the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. When King was assassinated in 1968, he was in Memphis to lead a demonstration of predominantly black sanitation workers who were on strike. Jesse Jackson has spent decades walking picket lines and preaching the union gospel of class solidarity among black, white, and Latino workers.

Union strength reached its peak (at 35 percent of the work force) in the United States in the mid-1950s. Unions enabled American workers, especially blue-collar workers, to share in the postwar prosperity and to join the middle class. Union pay scales boosted the wages of nonunion workers as well. Today, unionized workers continue to have higher wages and better benefits than their nonunion counterparts.

But it was not until the civil rights movement of the 1960s that black Americans began to gain their fair slice of these postwar economic gains. With organized labor finally becoming an ally, the civil rights crusade helped many black Americans move into the economic mainstream. They gained access to good-paying jobs—in factories, government, and the professions—that had previously been off-limits. In unionized firms, the wage gap between black and white workers narrowed significantly. Not so for the gap between union and nonunion workers. According to the Economic Policy Institute, unionized black males earn 19 percent more than blacks in comparable nonunion jobs.

According to Farrakhan, the road to black success is though entrepreneurship: by blacks owning businesses and keeping economic resources in the African-American community. This goal resonates with the American Dream, but it is a far cry from economic reality. Small businesses (including those owned by the Nation of Islam) are difficult to sustain and have a high failure rate. Most blacks, like most whites and Latinos, are wage earners, and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. And those who have joined or formed unions have better wages, working conditions, and benefits than those who have not.

At the Million Man March, Farrakhan preached personal atonement, up-by-the-bootstraps self-improvement, and a "cooperative effort" to rebuild the inner cities by bringing "government and corporate America" into an "alliance with

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black organizational, religious, civic, political, and fraternal leaders." Yet tragically absent from his litany was the institution that has played perhaps the largest role in improving the economic condition of black Americans: unions.

While appeals to self-help and racial pride may resonate with African-Americans in our nation's current political climate, they don't address the fundamental problems now facing the black community. To a significant degree, those problems are symptoms of economic distress. Inner-city black America has been especially hard hit by today's harsh economic trends, including the widening gap between rich and poor, corporate downsizing and layoffs, an increase in temporary and part-time work, and the export of decent inner-city jobs overseas.

The erosion of America's labor movement is a chief reason for the nation's declining wages and living standards and the nation's widening economic disparities. Today, union members account for only 16 percent of the American work force, the lowest percentage since the Depression. Some of that decline is the result of a shift from the nation's once-strong manufacturing sector to a service-oriented economy; some is due to the anti-union policies and appointments of the Reagan and Bush administrations; but some of it is the result of labor's own failure to organize new workers and new types of workplaces.

Soon after his election in October, the AFL-CIO's new president, John Sweeney, announced a different sort of self-help message: "I am here to tell you that the most important thing we can do—starting right now, today—is to organize every working woman and man who needs a better deal and a new voice." Sweeney wants to rekindle a spirit of militant unionism, focusing in part on sectors now composed disproportionally of minorities, women, and immigrants. His own union, the Service Employees International, has been one of labor's few success stories during the past decade, doubling its membership to 1.1 million by merging with other unions and by organizing janitors, nursing-home workers, clerical workers, and other low-wage workers.

The unions that have made the most headway in recruiting new members in recent years have drawn on themes and tactics from civil rights crusades and grassroots organizing campaigns. The most successful organizing drives have allied unions with church and community groups, such as ACORN and the Industrial Areas Foundation, and have recruited organizers from civil rights, neighborhood improvement, and women's rights groups. Since 1980, according to labor expert Kate Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University, it is workplaces with a higher percentage of minority workers that are more likely to win union elections.

Sweeney has promised to mobilize a wave of union organizing drives, and to recruit a new generation of organizers, especially minority activists. His goal is to expand not only the number of union members, but to increase labor's political clout by training the rank-and-file as campaign workers. A key component of the strategy is to expand voter registration and turnout among union members, the poor, and minorities.

Most unions, including those with growing minority membership, have been led by white males. This is now beginning to change as well. The recent AFL-CIO convention in New York was noteworthy for the large number of black and Latino delegates and for the fact that the convention voted to expand the AFL-CIO's executive council to increase minority and female representation. As a result, the number of minorities on the board rose from four out of thirty-five (11 percent) to eleven out of fifty-four (20 percent). Under Sweeney, labor's political agenda now looks remarkably similar to those of most progressive African-American organizations. It calls for a new wave of job-creating public investment in the nation's crumbling infrastructure, increasing the minimum wage, protecting social programs, passing national health insurance, expansion of job-training programs, and stronger enforcement of workplace safety regulations and antidiscrimination laws.

In the past two decades, neither organized labor nor the traditional civil rights establishment has had the political clout to secure many victories. But thanks to Sweeney's victory and the Million Man March, there is new excitement among both union and African-American activists. Both have a stake in expanding political participation among the bottom half of the electorate. To do so, they need to link their organizing activities and to enunciate a compelling vision of racial and economic justice. But the question remains whether a philosophy of racial separatism and self-advancement or a vision of worker solidarity and racial integration will prevail. □

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Susannah Sulzman
Harvesting the Skeptics

We stand at the edge of your garden
And pronounce it infested by weeds.
You make bread out of weeds,
And then you feed us.

Invited to feast at your banquet
We delight in critiquing the food.
You make choirs out of critics.
And teach us to sing.

We try to keep you safely harmless,
God of burning bushes and the cross.
You crash the gates, dancing,
and bring us to love.

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WHO IS JESUS?

The academy vs. the Gospels

Luke Timothy Johnson

From the start, Christianity has been rooted in the paradoxical claim that a human being executed as a criminal is the source of God's life-giving and transforming Spirit. From the start, this "good news" has been regarded as foolishness to the wise of the world.

Christianity has never been able to "prove" its claims except by appeal to the experiences and convictions of those already convinced. The only real validation for the claim that Christ is what the Creed claims him to be, that is, light from light, true God from true God, is to be found in the quality of life demonstrated by those who make this confession. The claims of the gospel cannot be demonstrated logically. They cannot be proved historically. They can be validated only existentially by the witness of authentic Christian discipleship.

Christianity has credibility, both with its own adherents and its despisers, to the degree that it claims and lives by its own distinctive identity. This means, at a minimum, recognizing that Christianity is not measured by cultural expectations but by the experiences and convictions by which it lives. The church must bear witness to the reality of a God who transforms suffering and death with the power of new life. A church that has lost a sense of boundaries—that is, a grasp of its self-definition—can only recover them by reasserting its character as a community of faith with a canon of Scripture and a creed.

It is not at all obvious *how* Christians can recover some sense of community, canon, and creed. The present polarization and distrust between conservative and liberal tendencies within Christianity make the recovery more difficult. But a start might be the simple recognition that whatever the church's discourse is, it should not be the same as the academy's, nor should it be subject to the same rules or the same criteria of validity. It is time for a return from the academic captivity of the church.

The church's crisis has been dramatically exposed in the current historical Jesus debate. There has been no clear sense of where "the church" stands as a community concerning the historical Jesus. One reason for this lack of consensus has been the loss within the church of any sense of how the Scripture can function as a basis for debate and decision making in response to crisis. This loss, in turn, is in considerable measure due to the hegemony of the modern historical-critical method of biblical scholarship. Several generations of scholars and theologians have been disabled from direct and responsible engagement with the texts of the tradition in their religious dimension by an uncritical acceptance of the epistemological assumptions of that method. Even more obvious has been the disappearance of the Creed as a meaningful framework for reading Scripture and undertaking theological discourse within the community.

Allow me to speak as a teacher of New Testament in a nondenominational seminary. Shouldn't we communicate to students that the church is not really only an institutionalized form of racism, sexism, and speciesism, but is a place in the world where the power of resurrection life can be realized and enacted? Shouldn't we treat the canon of Scripture as something more than the arbitrary or ideologically motivated preemptive suppression of variety in the ancient church by patriarchal bishops, and show students how the fundamental issue of the character of God's gift in the crucified messiah, and therefore also the character of discipleship in response to that gift, was and is at stake in the question of which documents are to be read authoritatively in the church? Shouldn't we be willing to assert with students, as every Christian theologian before us was willing to assert, that Jesus is Son of God made flesh, before engaging the question of how that paradoxical statement can be intellectually engaged?

Most of all, we need to understand the primary task of theology not to be the reform of the world's social structures, nor the ideological critique of the church as institution, nor the discovery of what is false or distorting in religious behavior, but the discernment and articulation of the work of the living God. Within the Christian community, this means the discernment of the ways in which the transformative power of the Spirit of the risen Christ is present and active, as well as the ways it is resisted and impeded. It means articulating the implications of God's work in human experience for the response of the church in obedience and service. And by such theological activity, the story of Jesus comes alive both within the texts of human experience and in the texts of the New Testament.

Those of us who are entrusted with the formation of Christianity's ministers and leaders ought, I think, to take

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less seriously the judgment of our academic colleagues and more seriously the judgment of God, "before whose judgment seat we all shall stand" (Rom. 14:10). We need to ask not only what we are teaching but also what we are failing to teach. We can begin by affirming what is positive in the gift of God in Jesus Christ and what is of astonishing and transformative power in the story of Jesus, before asking what is lacking in it and how it might need supplementing from other traditions. We should, in a word, ask of each other before and during our criticism of the Christian tradition an explicit and exquisite loyalty to it.

If such loyalty is to be an authentic expression of faith, however, it must also *be* critical. Ultimate human loyalty is appropriately directed to the living God rather than to community memory. The task of theology in the church is not only discernment of God's word and praise of God's work, but also critical reflection on the received tradition and the adequacy of the human response to God.

The "historical-critical method" has tended to be overly critical of the tradition and insufficiently critical of itself.

Biblical scholarship can play a key role in such critical reflection. It has failed to play that role adequately because it has for too long attached itself to a narrow construal of "critical." In biblical scholarship, "critical" has tended to be identified with "historical." The "historical-critical method," furthermore, has tended to be overly critical of the tradition and insufficiently critical of itself. For biblical scholarship to play its appropriate critical role within Christian theology—and my argument here concerns *only* its function within the church as distinct from the academy—it requires a broader and more comprehensive model for the apprehension of the New Testament writings as such, and requires as well a more inclusive sense of "criticism."

New Testament scholars need a model that enables them to approach the texts in as many ways as the texts approach us. At least four aspects of the New Testament texts should be taken into account.

1. Anthropological: These writings are thoroughly human in the process of their composition. Appeals to divine inspiration are claims about the ultimate origin of the texts and their authority. Inspiration is not a key to interpretation. The texts are the result of real human persons interpreting their experience, and seeking to understand their experience with available cultural symbols. The anthropological perspective recognizes that religious literature is generated by real experiences and convictions, and not simply by aesthetic concerns.

2. Historical: The writers of the New Testament were not Trobrianders. They were Jews of the first-century Mediterranean world. Their experiences and convictions, therefore, were necessarily interpreted within a symbolic framework specific to that place and time. If the anthropological dimension establishes connections between readers and these texts, the historical dimension demands coming to grips with the cultural "otherness" of the writings. Recognizing the historical dimension is not the same as using the texts for the kind of historical reconstruction engaged in by the Jesus Seminar [a group of scholars who, since 1985, have voted on the authenticity of passages in the New Testament].

3. Literary: The canon of the New Testament consists of compositions that are diverse in their literary fashioning, perspectives, and purposes. The meaning of texts is inextricably connected with their literary construction. Gaining access to such meaning demands of the interpreter, therefore, a genuine engagement with the literary complexities of the respective compositions. One of the great deficiencies of the historical-critical model has been its disregard for this dimension, leading to the fragmentation of the texts into smaller pieces that can be used as historical sources. It is certainly true that some New Testament compositions were complex in their construction and did make use of earlier sources. But the final literary form of such texts was canonized, and only attention to this given literary dimension can accurately be called the interpretation of the "New Testament." It is striking that most of modern historical Jesus research begins with the elimination of the literary structure of the Gospels.

4. Religious: Members of a religious movement produced these compositions for other members of that movement. More than that, specifically religious experiences and convictions generated the writings. To read these compositions in terms simply of the historical information they provide is to miss the most important and most explicit insight they offer the reader, namely, how the experience of the powerful transforming Spirit of God that came through the crucified Messiah Jesus created not only a new understanding of who Jesus was but, simultaneously, a new understanding of God and God's way with the world.

A more adequate model for reading the New Testament, then, can be called an "experience/interpretation" model. The model takes seriously the deeply human character of the writings, the experiences, and convictions that generated them, and the cultural and historical symbols they appropriate. It enables the scholar to apprehend the historical dimensions of the New Testament texts without forcing them to perform a task for which they are ill-equipped, namely, to serve as sources for a reconstruction of Christian origins. Best of all, the model for understanding how the New Testament came into existence also provides a framework for interpreting these compositions within the life of the church.

New Testament scholarship within the church, then, should be critical first of all by being self-critical. Because so

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much of the work done within the framework of the historical-critical perspective lacked such self-examination, its hidden normative assumptions remained untested. The development of "ideological criticism" among contemporary scholars begins with the recognition that literature and art are not neutral, but always have an interest. Some of this criticism has focused on the ideological interest of the New Testament writings (for example, their patriarchalism), without also taking into account the ideological agenda of the interpreter.

The more recent tendency in scholarship to identify and name the ideological commitments of the interpreter is a positive step. Other critics can then evaluate fairly the extent to which such an ideological starting point enables readings and the extent to which it suppresses readings. They can also test the degree to which readings are consistent with declared perspectives.

It is entirely appropriate for an interpreter to declare an allegiance to the traditional Christian code as the ideological starting point for interpretation. The readings generated by such an interpreter can then fairly be tested by reference to that code. It would be equally appropriate for those who detested and despised traditional Christianity and sought to destroy it by means of undermining confidence in its normative texts to state their commitment clearly, so that their efforts also could be fairly evaluated by their chosen standard.

Biblical scholarship can also be "critical" of the New Testament texts themselves in ways that the "historical-critical" model did not allow. It can be challenged morally, religiously, and theologically for its adequacy, consistency, and cogency. Do the texts of the New Testament, when taken at face value, support a structure of society in which women are oppressed? Such texts can best be criticized, not by constructing an imaginary, alternative history of early Christianity in which women enjoyed equality, but on the basis of theological convictions that God's Spirit has brought to maturity within the church. Does the New Testament's inherited monotheism bring with it a virus of intolerance toward diversity that has infected Christian attitudes and behavior? These texts can best be criticized, not by inventing a history of Christianity that was non-Jewish, but by invoking other moral and religious principles within the text to counter the virus of intolerance.

Such an ecclesial hermeneutics begins with the premise that God's Spirit is working in the world to transform humans into the image of the "real Jesus." The discernment of human experience is brought into conversation with the complex and often conflicting voices of the normative texts of tradition, and the diversity of voices in the canon is allowed to converse with the diverse voices of contemporary experience. Contradictions in the scriptural texts can be exploited to provide new insights into the "mind of Christ" by which the church seeks to live. Biblical scholarship need not be "historical" in order to be "critical."

Finally, "critical" can mean allowing the texts to criticize the practices of the church and the assumptions of the tradition. This is obviously a legitimate and important function of scholarship within the church. It is what was originally intended by Luther's principle of *sola scriptura*. Luther recognized that without a dialectical relationship to the texts, in which they were given their own authority over the church, tradition could swallow them up and manipulate them to its own ends.

The historical-critical method inherited this perspective. A mistake was made, however, when the critical function was given to historical reconstruction rather than to the texts themselves. In truth, the sort of criticism of the church intended by Luther is located in the texts and not outside them. Here is where contemporary historical Jesus research has most seriously missed the point. The much-publicized Jesus Seminar, for example, declared its animosity toward a Jesus purveyed by televangelists. It regarded this Jesus as too much shaped in the direction of the divine by later doctrine. It saw this Jesus as too much the figure of eschatology.

But what the seminar failed to understand was that these images—if they are, indeed, seen as negative—would best be criticized *from within* the Gospel narratives themselves, not by constructing an "alternative fiction," or an image of Jesus recoverable only by dismantling the texts. If the Jesus Seminar is concerned about Christianity's preoccupation with Armageddon, then there are more than sufficient texts within the canon to challenge that obsession. The attempt to create a "noneschatological Jesus" not only distorts history, it is bad tactics. Those who consider the end of the world to be the gist of Jesus' message are convinced that it is found in the text. Only the demonstration that the texts themselves do not support such an overemphasis, and indeed combat such an emphasis, can be convincing.

In *The Five Gospels* (Macmillan), the Jesus Seminar warns against looking for a comfortable Jesus. That is sound advice. However, the truly uncomfortable Jesus, the genuinely "countercultural" Jesus, is not the one reconstructed according to the ethos of contemporary academics—whether it is John Dominic Crossan's politically correct revolutionary Jesus [*Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, 1994], or Marcus Borg's charismatic founder Jesus [*Jesus: A New Vision*, 1987], or any of the others—but the one inscribed in the canonical Gospels. The Jesus who truly challenges this age, as every age, is the one who suffers in obedience to God and calls others to such suffering service in behalf of humanity. This is the Jesus that classical Christianity has always proclaimed; this is an understanding of discipleship to which classical Christianity has always held.

The Jesus to whom Saint Francis of Assisi appealed in his call for a poor and giving rather than a powerful and grasping church was not the historical Jesus but the Jesus of the Gospels. One must only wonder why this Jesus is not also the "real Jesus" for those who declare a desire for religious truth, and theological integrity, and honest history. □

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AN INCOMPLETE CONFESSION

German bishops forgot their blessing on Hitler's wars

Gordon C. Zahn

Much well-deserved praise greeted the January 1995 statement of Germany's Catholic bishops marking the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Their admission that Christians (more specifically Catholics, one may assume) must share responsibility for the evils of the Holocaust was a sincere and courageous *mea culpa*: "During the period of the Third Reich Christians did not carry out the required resistance to racist anti-Semitism." It is fair to add, however, that this admission would have carried added force had it included the equally frank acknowledgment that this moral failure was traceable at least in part to the failure of church leadership to remind the faithful that such resistance was, in fact, "required" of them.

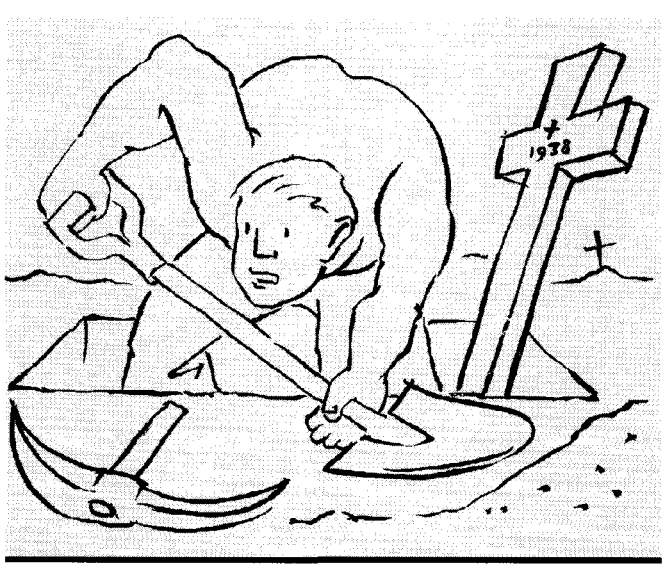
The bishops' January statement fell short in another, more crucial, sense. It ignored the church's failure to come to terms with what history must record as an even costlier moral failure. The missing confession could have used much the same wording: "During the period of the Third Reich, Christians did not carry out the required resistance to its unjust wars." In this case the failure was more complicated: not only did the spiritual leaders fail to remind their flocks that such resistance was required, but they actively contributed to the formation and maintenance of war morale. Though there may have been bishops tainted with anti-Semitic sentiments, there were no official statements endorsing the Final Solution. In contrast, episcopal support for the Nazi war effort was publicly declared from the beginning and often shocking in its extremes of patriotic zeal and expression.

The present-day German hierarchy also marked the anniversary of VE-Day by issuing a statement in May dealing with World War II. As with the statement on the Holocaust, there is much to praise. It provides a general accounting of the great price paid by soldiers and civilians alike for Hitler's commitment to the ideology of "total war," and places special emphasis upon the devastation suffered by most major German cities in the Allied bombings.

Consideration is given to the postwar sufferings of the almost 12 million Germans forced to flee from their homes—with more than 2 million perishing in the process—a loss balanced, the bishops admit, by the destruction and sufferings visited upon neighboring populations as the result of German aggression. In this context reference is made again to the horrors of the concentration camps and programs designed for the elimination, not only of European Jewry but other "undesirable" categories of human beings. All this, sustained through terror directed against all who dared to take a stand against the party and its powers, resulted in tyranny over the German population itself. Such resisters became helpless victims of the gross abuses and distortions of what passed for Nazi "justice."

This leads the bishops to raise a series of crucial questions: "Where was the protest against despotic acts and violent deeds? Why was there no outcry throughout the land when in one night all the synagogues burned? Why was there no resistance to the obvious preparations for war? Why was it that the German people came to their senses only after the catastrophe?" All good questions , and the bishops to their credit do not shy away from giving a strong answer: "Grave responsibility is theirs who, because of their position, could have known what was happening and through their influence could have prevented such crimes but had not done so, even made them possible and thereby assumed solidarity with the criminals."

The focus then shifts to Catholic resistance and actions directed against the church and its faithful members because of what is described as the "deep chasm" separating the church and its teachings from Nazi policies. Those who refused to comply with the regime and its demands are honored, some individually by name, others as groups and categories—laymen and women, priests, members of religious orders—for



Gordon C. Zahn *is the author of numerous books, including* In Solitary Witness: The Life and Death of Franz Jägerstätter *(Templegate).*

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demonstration of heroism and readiness to sacrifice, even to the point of martyrdom. Particular reference is made to the 12,000 Catholic priests (every second priest in Germany) who suffered abuse or even death in prison and concentration camps.

Bearing more closely upon the point of my essay, the state- ment continues, "With our predecessors in episcopal office we face the question whether the protest of the church was always sufficiently clear to counteract inhuman measures and to strengthen the power of resistance of Christians and the general population. In this we must confess there were failures, mistakes, and contradictions."

Rejecting the easy assumption of collective guilt, the bishops stress the need for an honest examination of conscience declaring, "With respect to the injustice and suffering brought to humanity and nations under the sign of National Socialism, there can be no justification for not facing the question of guilt. Only where guilt is acknowledged and repented can forgiveness and reconciliation take place."

One hesitates to criticize so courageous and forthcoming a *mea culpa*, particularly one so rare as an admission of moral failure on the part of ecclesiastical authority. Even so, there remains that one glaring omission and the valuable lesson it could hold for today's Christian faced with personal responsibility for forming a correct conscience relating to war and participation in war. That omission, the absence of any acknowledgment or apology for the support given by those same "predecessors" to what must rank as one of history's most unjust wars, demands recognition.

In 1939, Military Bishop Franz Josef Rarkowski greeted the outbreak of war in Poland with a message to Catholics in uniform, calling upon them to consider "what is at stake for our *Volk* in these stormy days; and, in whatever is asked of you, each sees before him the shining example of a true warrior, our *Fuehrer* and Supreme Commander, the first and most valiant soldier of the Greater German *Reich*, who is even now with you at the battlefront." Some allowance might be made for a military bishop taking it as part of his professional responsibility to bolster the morale of the armed forces. Even granting that possibility, however, the rabid nationalism of all of Rarkowski's wartime pastorals went far beyond the call of duty.

But he was by no means alone. The eight Bavarian bishops in a joint pastoral (issued *after* the victories over Poland, France, and the neutral Low Countries but *before* the invasion of the Soviet Union) echoed much the same theme and tone: "...beloved flock, we are today directing a word of exhortation to you in our fatherly love and concern, that it may inspire you to devote your full efforts to service of the Fatherland and the precious Homeland (*Heimat*) in conscientious fulfillment of duty and serious awareness of your mission...."

Such sentiments were standard for all episcopal statements issued throughout the war, even for Bishop (later Cardinal) von Galen, rightly honored as the most heroic of his peers for public sermons denouncing actions taken by the Gestapo against seminaries as well as other open protests against Nazi interferences with religious activities. Yet in his first wartime pastoral he declared, "...Once again a large part of our men and youth has been called to arms, and they are engaged in bloody conflict or stand guard on the borders in firm determination to shield the Fatherland and to risk their lives to win for our *Volk* a peace of freedom and justice."

Readers with long memories might dismiss my critique as academic "ax-grinding"—perhaps with some justification. When my documented 1962 study, *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars* (still in print and available from the University of Notre Dame Press), was published, it provoked a major controversy on both sides of the Atlantic involving even higher circles of the Vatican.

"Ax-grinding" or not, the point the book sought to make was important and the May statement's failure to address that point makes it no less relevant today. Why in so commendably honest an assessment, one which admits the "serious responsibility" of those who "because of their position could have known what was happening," is there no reference at all to the support provided by those "predecessors" to Hitler's war? Surely German Catholic soldiers and airmen who obeyed their orders and participated in what the bishops now recognize as crimes against humanity would have taken strong encouragement from the bishop of Trier's 1940 admonition that "...we must now put all of our inner and external powers at the service of the *Volk*, not only as Germans but also as Christians following the principles of our Faith; we must make every sacrifice that the situation demands of us; we must patiently bear every cross that is placed upon us...." *Not only as Germans but also as Christians.*

Following upon January's apology for German Catholicism's failure to oppose the Holocaust, a similar apology for having encouraged support for, and participation in, what few today would deny was an unjust war should not have been unthinkable. It would have cleared German Catholicism's record of what remains a major blemish and might have inspired religious leaders of every faith and every nation to recognize and condemn the evils of nationalism which provided the seeds for Hitler's war and many other "little" wars since. Furthermore, so courageous an act might inspire a long overdue review of the church's traditional theology of war and its application (or, more accurately, its non-application) to actual wars.

By completing their unfinished *mea culpa*, the German bishops could open the way to a much needed reevaluation of the church's readiness to give active support (and, all too often, its blessing) to Caesar's wars whenever and wherever they occur. A sincere expression of contrition for the tragic record of ecclesiastical support for Hitler's war might even yet provide the opportunity for religion to accept and fulfill its true mission and, by so doing, make a truly significant contribution to the history of human warfare. □

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Richard Alleva

TWO SMOOTH CHARACTERS

'Mighty Aphrodite' & 'Goldeneye'

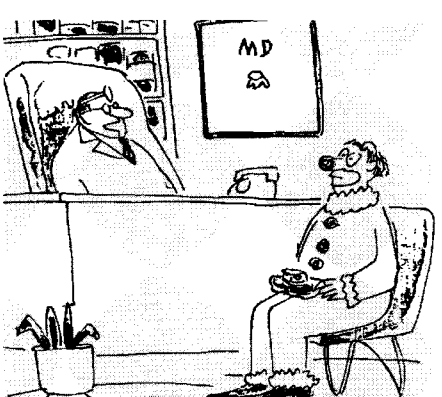
In one of his letters to Louis Untermeyer, Robert Frost insisted upon the essential cowardice of comedy, its function being not to confront harsh realities but to elude them with laughter. Comedy lovers like myself who believe that the form confronts truth in its own way may find Frost's notion perverse, but you can at least grasp his point by viewing *Mighty Aphrodite*. For Woody Allen's latest isn't just a comedy but an antitragedy. It celebrates the one thing tragedy always destroys: blissful ignorance.

At first, *Aphrodite*'s hero, Lenny (played by Allen), seems a shmuck version of a tragic hero as he pursues the truth regardless of the consequences. An adoring adoptive father, he becomes obsessed with finding the birth-mother of his child, partly for reassurance that there's nothing genetically wrong with the boy but mostly because Lenny feels he will know his son better if he understands the nature of the mother.

But when Linda Ash, a.k.a. Judy Cum, is tracked down, she turns out to be a genetic nightmare. The scion of a long line of idiots and criminals, she's a talentless would-be actress working as a hooker and porn performer. She's dumb and tasteless, feckless about health and morality, and phallically obsessed. (Her living room shows that she raids sex shops the way others do antique stores.) But she's also good-hearted, as emotionally fragile as she is physically robust, and, in her own way, honest. Feeling protective, Lenny attaches himself to Linda without telling her he's adopted her child, and he tries to get her out of the sex business and into a relationship with an equally good-hearted and dumb boxer. He even confronts her furious pimp. But, as his own marriage to an ambitious art galley manager, Amanda, deteriorates, Lenny seems headed for a fling with Linda and the sort of fate meted out to Emile Jannings in *The Blue Angel*. A Greek chorus, magically transported from ancient Greece to Lenny's consciousness, keeps warning our hero to beware, not to go too far, not to know too much. All the usual advice that Greek heroes ignore.

But not to worry. That's what the movie keeps telling us over and over. Not to worry. Lenny doesn't go too far. No one goes too far. When Lenny confronts the pimp, he doesn't dare physical heroics but simply pays off the bully with a season pass to the Knicks. He does sleep with Linda once but is glad to reconcile with his wife, who in turn has fended off an adulterous relationship with a business associate. Lenny never tells Linda that he's adopted her son and, when that one moment of carnality with our hero makes her pregnant, Linda never tells Lenny about it but finds a husband for herself (the boxer having retreated) who will accept her checkered past.

And fate proves benevolent, acting more like a celestial sitcom writer than the harsh taskmaster of the Greeks.



"You realize, of course, drugs have side effects. If I give you something to make you laugh on the outside, it will probably make you cry on the inside."

Happy coincidences abound. Lenny is able to bribe the pimp because the latter is a sports fan and our hero just happens to be a sports writer with access to season passes. Amanda decides to revive her marriage precisely on the day when her husband's fidelity is faltering. Linda's happiness drops out of the blue, a literal *deus ex machina*. It's all enough to make any self-respecting Greek chorus consider a career change. Who needs its dire warnings when the universe is so resolutely untragic?

Yet what a superbly slaphappy chorus it is. Its speeches and strophes bring out the old, sly *New Yorker* Woody Allen who once seemed the heir of S. J. Perelman and Robert Benchley. "Ah!" the masked figures intone, sinking to their knees. "Certain things are better left unthunk." And—in an inspired moment of lunacy that rivals the Marshall McLuhan episode in *Annie Hall*—when the chorus members raise their hands to the lord of Olympus and beseech his intervention, they are met with a distinctly modern response.

Less inspired, often pedestrian, is Allen's writing of the realistic passages, what Allen's idol, Ingmar Bergman, called the "dirt of life": marital quarrels, would-be seductions, everyday social encounters. I'm told that everything we hear in Woody Allen films is written by him and never improvised by the actors; yet much of the language might just as well be improvised since it lacks either hilarity or bite. The Lenny-Linda scenes come off best, kept afloat by Allen's confident direction and Mia Sorvino's piquant acting, but even they would have been better with fresher dialogue. The one conversation that contains something truly unexpected is a passage between Linda and her boxer-suitor. Asked to reveal one of his dreams to her, this knucklehead responds with a fantasy about being borne aloft in the talons of a giant hawk and dropped into a field of snow. It's an astonishing moment that believably prefigures how the boy's love of purity will lead him to reject Linda. Allen needs more surprises like this in his writing.

But Allen's overall plotting and his direction of camera and actors are deft.

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Mighty Aphrodite is, on the whole, a diverting testament to the mingy wisdom of keeping your secrets to yourself and sticking your neck out only so far.

James Bond, who has never hesitated to stick his neck out—along with other parts of his anatomy—is back. Or is he? Some critics have complained that *Goldeneye* is rather un-Bondian. Its chief villain is no titan of evil like Auric Goldfinger but a rather life-sized former colleague of Bond's, 006 in fact (Sean Bean), with a perfectly legitimate, historically grounded grudge against Great Britain. This alone draws the story closer to Len Deighton's or Adam Hall's territory than Ian Fleming's. And feminism has made its influence felt: "M" is now a woman (well played by Dame Judi Dench with her purring mezzo) who verbally skewers 007 for his male chauvinism. (Fleming always referred to his mother as "M." Maybe this movie is onto something.) The romantic interest here is no babe but a keenly intelligent and humane computer programmer who also puts Bond in his place as merely one of those "boys with toys" who periodically blow up parts of our planet. "What's the matter, James?" Sean Bean taunts Pierce Brosnan. "No glib reply? No pithy comeback?" Indeed, Brosnan does more silent brow-furrowing and less wisecracking than any Bond to date. Like all his predecessors, he keeps a poker face, but an actor's poker face needs something in the eyes to serve as counterpoint, and Brosnan lacks Connery's glint of menace and Roger Moore's insouciant twinkle.

Yet the movie easily surmounts these problems through blithe inconsistency. Subdued Brosnan may be in manner, but that doesn't stop the scriptwriters from having him mow down the usual squads of enemies. Is Bean too commonplace to represent a super villain? Oh well, let him have two assistants to supply the requisite garishness: a female sadist who reaches orgasm by crushing men to death between her thighs, and a Russian techno-nerd who exults, after each of his online coups, "I am in-veen-cible!" Is the heroine a little too three-dimensional and, as embodied by the extremely talented Izabella Scorupco, altogether too poignant for an assassin like Bond? But in this regard Brosnan's sensitivity serves the movie well, and his stricken look in the face of her outrage soon has the couple lolling in love on Caribbean beaches.

And let it also be noted that Martin Campbell's direction is a triumph. Gone is the travelogue look that made almost all previous Bond movies too laid-back even when the technology was blasting away. Campbell and his cinematographer use a darker, richer palette, and the camera constantly darts in on the action like a skilled surfer cresting giant waves. This is one Bond movie that is lithe as well as noisy and, unlike even the best of its predecessors, it doesn't sag in its last quarter hour.

Finally, it carries on, hilariously and unashamedly, one of my favorite Bond traditions. Once again, the British Secret Service is portrayed as the arm of an ubiquitous and spectacular global power, a political and economic colossus bestriding the lesser breeds while the United States (represented by a hick CIA operative) serves as a bumbling sidekick, huffing and puffing in England's wake. Rule Britannia! Britannia, rule our dreams! □

MEDIA

Frank McConnell

A VERY GOOD 80 YEARS

Frank Sinatra's birthday

As of December 12, 1995, Frank Sinatra is eighty. And that may be one of the most poignant lead sentences I've ever written.

The celebrations, the hype, the hagiography are in place: deluxe CD sets from Reprise, Capitol, and Columbia; an ABC special aired December 14 with—well—everybody (Tony Bennett, Springsteen, Patti LaBelle, etc.) doing Sinatra's signature songs; three-story billboards of Ol' Blue Eyes have been erected along Fifth Avenue in New York, *the* city of which Sinatra, at his zenith, was virtually an incarnation. He's already received the Medal of Freedom from Ronald Reagan; but don't be surprised if Bill and Hillary find some way of crashing the party (it's election year, after all—and publicly honoring Francis Albert can't, you know, hurt).

What strikes me most about it all, though, is, as I said, the poignancy. Frank Sinatra—*Frank Sinatra!*—is eighty. It's lovely that he's still with us, that he actually carried the ball all the way downfield, and that he did it—the phrase will be repeated nauseatingly in weeks to come—his way. And yet underneath all the octogenarian adulation, you sense a rather unique melancholy. Somehow—I don't know any other way to say this—it shouldn't *be*. It's okay if you get old or if I get old: we expect that, we even, bitterly, hope to. It's not okay for our icons (and if Sinatra isn't an icon, then it's a null set): their aging, oddly more than our own, underscores the irreversibility of time's arrow, measures how far *we've* come since we first heard or saw them.

Thinking about Sinatra at eighty, I've been thinking about Hopkins's "Spring and Fall: To a Young Child." Addressing little Margaret, who's sad at the falling of the leaves, the poet concludes, "It is the blight man was born for/It is Margaret you mourn for."

At least three generations of Americans slow-danced and, with luck, made out with this guy's voice in the background. They got all hot and dewy-eyed to the skinny, winsome kid in the bow tie who sang with Tommy Dorsey; or to the hip, knowing fellow with the jauntily-tilted fedora in the fifties; or the tux-clad, increasingly portly and raspy Vegas showman. And they saw the movies: from the gawky but affect-

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ing performance in *On the Town* to the genius of *From Here to Eternity* and *The Man with the Golden Arm* to the self-indulgent silliness of *Von Ryan's Express* and *Dirty Dingus McGee*. Some dummy is bound to call him "larger than life." Wrong: as with Cagney or Ellington or Astaire, we cherish him because his career is part of the topography of *our* lives. A recovering technophobe, I bought my first CD player only in 1990. And—though I would never have described myself as a Sinatra fan—the first CD I bought was, inevitably, his 1956 masterpiece, *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*. "Inevitably," because I could think of no other all-but-perfect single anthology of American popular song at its greatest.

Forget the films, even the fine ones. And forget the tantrums, the excesses, the *Cosa Nostra* connections, the goofy politics—all the stuff that Kitty Kelley detailed in her biography, *His Way*. Forget it at least for a moment, and remember the singer.

Novelist Ishmael Reed once said, visiting my class, that he would rather have written the lyrics to "Stardust" than any of his own books. The students were shocked (had they, I wondered, heard the damn song?), but Ishmael was being honest. After the explosion that was rock 'n' roll, we're only beginning to realize that American song in the thirties and forties was and is one of the supreme accomplishments of our culture, that the work of Gershwin, Porter, Arlen, Berlin, and Rodgers and Hart shines with as great a brilliance as, say, the sonnets of Wyatt, Surrey, and Sidney. And Sinatra, in his two magnificent decades, the fifties and sixties, was the ideal—I'm tempted to say, predestined—voice of that great tradition.

Not that he ever, really, had the greatest chops. Bing Crosby had a more natural delivery, as did the sadly neglected Perry Como—and Nat Cole had a delivery and a timbre almost *preternaturally* natural. Joe Williams, especially in his years with Count Basie, had a vibrant, grab-you-by-the-tie baritone and a sense of swing that Blue Eyes could only dream about. Tony Bennett had, and has, cleaner pitch: notice how often, even at his grandest, Frank slides up or down to the note—that's uncertainty manifesting itself as genius. And Mel Tormé has everything. The most *musicianly* of singers, a white male Sarah Vaughan, he has an ease, intelligence, and execution that, if you really listen, can blow you out of your chair.

And yet. In his autobiography, *It Wasn't* ALL *Velvet*, Tormé says that he learned more about singing from listening to and talking with Sinatra than from anybody else; and Tormé is, rather famously, not given to err on the side of humility. Miles Davis, who *never* erred that way, said once in *DownBeat* that he learned how to play ballads by listening to the way Sinatra broke up his phrases. And the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia told *Musician* magazine that his idea of an ideal studio soundmix was the Sinatra/Nelson Riddle collaborations of the fifties.

Garcia was right. By the fifties, Sinatra's voice had deepened, taken on a character it doesn't have in the early records. (In those days he'd smoke a few cigarettes before a performance to slacken the vocal chords.) It was a kindova baritone, a sorta low tenor—a bastard voice, like that bastard horn the tenor saxophone, half-woodwind and half-brass, and just the thing for that bastard genre, American song. And Nelson Riddle, an arranger straight from God, knew just how to place it, like a solitaire diamond on an onyx ring: wickedly clever riffs by the woodwinds above and the brass below the singer's range, and with plenty of space for him to do what he did better than anyone—turn song into exalted, inspired speech. Listen to *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*, *Come Fly With Me*, or any of the albums from that period. He was never better. Maybe nobody was. Maybe the American songbook never was.

It's been called *belcanto*, improvisational singing, and *Sprachgesang*, literally talking-song. It's both and neither. Like instrumental jazz—the single greatest American achievement—it's music brought to a unique pitch of tenderness, bitterness, and sheer smartass passion. And if this isn't sublime art, then nothing is.

Among later singers, Willie Nelson, Mandy Patinkin, and especially Harry Connick, Jr., have *something* of the same mojo: something. But the solitaire is still the solitaire. If Tormé aligns with Sarah Vaughan, Sinatra aligns with Billie Holiday: less chops, less range, less spirit, but a truckload—no, a freight train—of soul, evident in nearly every note of those best, stunning, albums. As surely as Twain's or Hemingway's or Basie's, it's the American voice.

And Frank Sinatra is eighty. Chops all gone, concentration shot, waiting—let's say it—for what W. C. Fields called "the Fellow in the satin slippers." As are we all. And he was sometimes wrong and sometimes crummy. As are we all.

And he was also, for a very *long* shining moment, an artist who made us proud of ourselves, just for hearing him. As Auden wrote of W. B. Yeats, "You were silly like us/Your gift survived it all." □

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In Santa Fe, a clash of cultures

Fire in the Mind
Science, Faith, and the Search for Order
George Johnson
Alfred A. Knopf, $27.50, 379 pp.

Chet Raymo

In the introduction to this fine book, the author makes the following statement: "There are two opposing views of the scientific enterprise. Almost all science books, popular and unpopular, are written on the assumption that there are actually laws of the universe out there, like veins of gold, and that scientists are miners extracting the ore. We are presented with an image of adventurous explorers uncovering Truth with a capital T. But science can also be seen as a construction, a man-made edifice that is historical, not timeless—one of many alternative ways of carving up the world."

George Johnson, a science writer for the *New York Times* and author of two previous books on science, stakes out his claim somewhere between the extremes of science as discovery and science as construction. His stand is not as radical as he makes it sound. I would say that most science books being written today, popular and unpopular, crowd into the same territory.

Almost no one believes any more that scientific truth is timeless; indeed, the provisional, evolving nature of truth can reasonably be taken as one of the defining notions of twentieth-century science. On the other hand, few scientists believe that the many alternative ways of carving up the world are equally viable; most scientists are convinced that theirs is the Camino Real, the royal road to truth.

Johnson takes us to the terminus of the old Camino Real in his search for the nature of truth, to the environs of Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is a place rich in the clash of cultures: Tewa (the culture of the pueblos), Hispanic, and Anglo. Native faiths contend with Catholicism, Christian Fundamentalism, and various New Age religions for the hearts and minds of men and women. And don't forget that other faith system, science. On a mesa outside of Santa Fe is located one of the nation's premier research establishments, Los Alamos, where the secrets of the atom were teased into the blazing light of day. And in the city of Santa Fe is the Santa Fe Institute, which touts itself as the revolutionary hotbed of twenty-first-century science.

It would be hard to imagine a place better suited to contemplation of diverse avenues to truth, and Johnson exploits the cultural diversity of northern New Mexico to give his book a rich and engaging texture. He is respectful of all of the local ways of carving up the world, and takes away something from each of them. But it is to the scientists that he gives his fullest attention and ultimate loyalty.

The largest part of *Fire in the Mind* is an exposition of contemporary science, and Johnson's rendition is as good as any one is likely to find. As a scientist, I found little new here in the way of information, but I was frequently struck by fresh

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and luminous insights. Johnson helps us understand what's going on at the research establishments on the mesa and in the town. The physicists at Los Alamos can be taken to represent the reductionist way of doing science: complex phenomena are broken down into smaller and smaller bits that can be more exactly known. The scientists at Santa Fe take the opposite approach, using computers to investigate ever more complex systems. Phenomena emerge at the edge of chaos, they say, that cannot be reduced to the laws of physics; examples are human consciousness and the evolution of life. They call this new way of doing science, simply, complexity.

Lately, complexity has become all the vogue, and Santa Fe the glittering Hollywood of the new science; Johnson contributes to the hype. In fact, reductionism remains far and away the most fruitful way of doing science; complexity has so far added little to our understanding of nature. But the complexologists are confident, and Johnson's book may yet turn out to be a useful primer for the future. Our increasing reliance upon computers will almost certainly affect the way we think about the world, adding new metaphors and tools to the search for truth. I would not be surprised if a computer-based shift of paradigms is in the offing, perhaps early in the next century.

However, it will be nature and nature alone that will finally arbitrate between reductionism and complexity as ways of carving up the world. Science is indeed a faith system, but it is committed to skeptical self-examination. As Johnson writes: "It is because of this willingness to put its feet to reality's fires that science, like no other system of belief, has given us so much power to predict and control nature. In this way it is unlike any religion or philosophy."

What then of those other ways of knowing, the Tewa way, for example? Are all faith systems equally viable? Johnson writes: "If [the Tewa] way of carving up the world didn't provide levers powerful enough to move the earth, it gave them the inner strength to weather invasion after invasion—by Navajos, by Spanish soldiers and missionaries, by inquiring anthropologists, and finally by the physicists of Los Alamos. For the Tewa, the purpose of building mental orders seems less to control the environment that to control the world within." But, as Johnson points out, the doctors of the Indian Health Service are usually more successful than the pueblo healers at curing sickness. And the Tewa way of making sense out of the world won't put a television in the front room or a 4x4 in the garage. A faith system that supplies inner strength finds itself under increasing pressure from a faith system that satisfies material wants.

George Johnson's objective and sympathetic discussion of this clash of cultures takes us to the heart of a profound intellectual issue of our time: What is the fate of traditional faiths in a world materially dominated by the scientific way of knowing? □

Chet Raymo *teaches science at Stonehill College in North Easton, Massachusetts, and writes a science column for the* Boston Globe.

CHANGING WITNESS

Catholic Bishops and Public Policy, 1917–1994

Michael Warner

Foreword by George Weigel

Historian Michael Warner traces the development of the social teachings of America's Catholic bishops from World War I to the present and shows how papal teaching, the reception of the Second Vatican Council, the upheavals in American morals, mores, and politics, and the bureaucratic evolution of the bishops' conference all contribute to a "changing witness" in the volatile years between 1917 and 1994.

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Lawrence S. Cunningham

Küng has been investigating the abiding centers of the three great monotheistic religions of the West (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) in order to foster interreligious connections which would address the compelling problems of the contemporary age, especially the issue of peace. The first of his trilogy, on Judaism, has already been published. A volume on Islam will finish the work. *Christianity* is the centerpiece of the project.

Küng is not a dispassionate historian. His central claim is that the core fact of Christianity is faith in Jesus Christ but the answer to the query about Christ ("What think ye of the Christ?) has undergone a series of paradigmatic shifts even though the core truth of Jesus Christ has never been lost to the tradition. These paradigms about Christ run parallel to paradigmatic shifts in the history of the church which, according to Küng, run from early apocalyptic through the Hellenistic and Roman Catholic medieval to the Reformed and Enlightenment paradigms. We now stand on the cusp of what Küng calls the ecumenical (postmodern?) paradigm. There is, however, the "abiding substance of the faith," which is Jesus the Christ. That fundamental concern keeps these paradigm shifts from being seen as discretely atomized units in history.

Christianity: Essence, History, and Future,
by Hans Küng
Continuum, $44.50, 936 pp.

Küng takes us from the nascent church to the period after Vatican II. There is no doubt that he has read extensively, untangles a great number of difficult stories in the history of the church, and writes with passion and vigor (but with too much reliance on boldface type and exclamation points). I plowed through this great lump of a book both because I like church history and also as a duty. When I finished the volume I asked: Could I recommend this work to a well-educated and interested reader? My answer is no.

There are a number of reasons for this evaluation. First, Küng frequently refers to his other published works (especially his *Great Christian Thinkers*, which was a kind of finger exercise for this book), so that one needs those works to see the full argument of this one. Second, Küng's judgments are often marred by his own acerbic asides about anything connected to the papacy, the Roman curia, or Roman theology (a little of this goes a long way). Third, he seems to have a tin ear when it comes to spirituality (as well as a thin grasp of Christian mysticism; Bernard McGinn's seminal work finds no place in his bibliography). In short, he is long on the history of dogma but meager on the life of prayer, sacraments, and so on.

Only those predisposed to accept Küng's paradigmatic methodology and his ideological presuppositions will find this a satisfactory work. It has some fine pages (I learned a good deal about the background of the Serb/Croat religious antagonisms) but overall it is a disappointment. We still need a good thick one-volume history of the church. Küng's *Christianity* (the same reaction greeted his volume on Judaism) is simply too idiosyncratic; too Küngian.

The posthumous collection of Hebblethwaite's dispatches to the *National Catholic Reporter* from the Rome of John Paul II is like a walk down memory lane. This compilation ranges from the eminent British Vaticanologist's first reports on the election of the first Slavic pope in 1978 to a final column assessing the list of cardinals created in late 1994. Hebblethwaite provides a panoramic, if somewhat punctuated, survey of the more public doings of one of the more celebrated popes of recent memory.

Pope John Paul II and the Church,
by Peter Hebblethwaite
Sheed & Ward, $16.95, 312 pp.

What made Hebblethwaite such a readable journalist is that, unlike most English-language reporters posted to the Vatican, he had an excellent grasp of Catholic theology and Catholic culture. Thus, for example, his discussion of *Veritatis splendor* has a certain heft because he knew what the theological issues were; who proposed them and who did not; who the authors of part of the encyclical were; and who was not consulted and why. The same is true of the discussion of, among other things, *Centesimus annus* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. He was particularly good about contextualizing John Paul's papal style in terms of those deep Polish roots which so naturally nourish Marian devotion, millenarian aspirations, and an angle on Europe that does not take, as its starting point, the West looking to the East.

Collections of columns, of course, have their limitations. Reading this book was rather like reading a biography with too many chapters and not enough connective material linking the chapters; the book hiccups along. That being said, close students of the Vatican will find this a useful resource for sorting out the major events of John Paul's papacy through 1994. Most of the reportorial material about the Vatican is, to be blunt, gossip. Hebblethwaite practiced what, for a better term, I would call the "high-

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er gossip" (with some first-rate intellectual analysis in the bargain). Good gossip always makes a good read.

It is a paradox to note that a religion which roots its very meaning in a doctrine of Incarnation has, at the same time, a perceived problem with the body and bodiliness. It would be otiose, however, to demonstrate that fact; it is sufficient to remember the historic Christian struggles with gnosticism, various forms of Platonism, and a steady stream of unhealthy asceticism, fear of sexuality, and a persistent temptation toward what the late Jacques Maritain called the sin of "angelism."

I Am My Body: A Theology of Embodiment,
by Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel
Crossroad, $11.95, 108 pp.

The bodiliness of Christianity in general and the female body in particular has received much attention from, mainly, women writers over the past few decades and this from the angle of social history, art history, psychology, philosophy, and theology. Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel's thin volume is part of that larger, much denser, conversation. Her little book has three parts. The central section ("The Body and Christianity") is framed by an opening discussion on the problematic of the body (having a body/being a body) and a concluding section on new areas for exploration "toward a theology of embodiment."

I read this book while thinking of a somewhat similar issue (how to convince my students that Jesus was like us and not simply, as one of my students once brilliantly said, "a spirit in a Jesus suit") and found her biblical reflections most helpful. Moltmann-Wendel notes how tactile the Gospels are: Jesus is always touching somebody or imposing hands or embracing or being kissed or having his head anointed or his feet washed in tears or being beaten up or having thorns shoved in his head or being nailed up on a cross. It is only the resurrected Christ who issues the *noli me tangere*. Her little book is replete with such insights while raising some very difficult questions about bodiliness from a Protestant feminist perspective. The bottom line, however, is this: she rejects any spirituality which abstracts from the bodily and any which so focuses on the spirit world beyond as to ignore the bodily needs of the present. Her work is not very systematic, but there are valuable things to learn from it. The usefulness of the volume would have been enhanced had there been an index (always an irritating omission in my judgment) and an enlarged bibliography including more English-language works.

Tilley's volume on postmodern theologies has an interesting beginning. In 1993 he had the very good idea of organizing his doctoral seminar in such a way that the papers could make, after appropriate reworking, a coherent volume that would provide a kind of *status questionis* relative to postmodern theological trends. He, in turn, would edit the work and provide the explanatory nexus linking the various "schools" of the postmodern enterprise.

Postmodern Theologies: The Challenge of Religious Diversity,
by Terrence W. Tilley et al.
Orbis, $19, 182 pp.

Tilley's taxonomy is fourfold. First, "constructive" postmodernisms, or those theologies that attempt to extend the modern project by appropriating its main features within theological discourse (for example, David Tracy's revisionist theology). Second, postmodern "dissolutions" which intensify the erosions of belief by a hermeneutics of suspicion; these theologies (represented by Thomas Altizer and Mark Taylor) tend toward the hermetically academic and, as such, are rather harmless exercises. Third, postliberal theology whose most articulate practitioner is Yale's George Lindbeck. And fourth, those school's that ground theology in community praxis; the most widely recognized of these would be the liberation theologians represented here by an essay on Gustavo Gutierrez.

The individual essays are workman-

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The next issue of
Commonweal will be dated
January 12, 1996.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

like, providing an entry into writings which might otherwise prove formidable for those not instructed in the arcane jargon of postmodernism. Tilley helps by the simple strategy of introducing the various sections with short essays. In a final chapter he makes religious diversity a test case to show how the theologians represented in these various "schools" would respond to the issue of, say, the meaningfulness of theological discourse in a cross-cultural setting or the exclusive claims of Christianity. There is a bibliography of books cited in the essays and a good index. For a first look at the workings of postmodern theology this is an uneven but useful collection. It may well stimulate further efforts in this protean field.

A final note: What I most admire about this book is the model which Tilley provides of how a master teacher can produce solid research in a collaborative effort with tyros. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham *is professor of theology and chair of the department at the University of Notre Dame.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

sultation with the council, and also designates three at-large members, usually to represent some special constituency such as young people, seniors, or people with disabilities. At each biennial diocesan assembly, lay people select twelve members, divided among the five regions of the diocese; religious sisters elect three members, diocesan priests two, and religious order priests one.

The bishop regularly attends monthly council meetings, except when other urgent duties keep him away. He leaves the conduct of the meetings to the council and its elected chairperson but offers his opinion when asked (sometimes with off-the-record comments on delicate issues). In the four years (1987–91) I served on the council I can't recall any time he attempted to impose his views on the members, even when comments were somewhat critical. He didn't always follow our advice, but always listened to what we had to say.

The council concerns itself with many aspects of diocesan policy. During my tenure as a member, for example, we considered, among other issues, the establishment of an office for black Catholics and an office for lay ministries; development of parish council norms; policies for use of alcohol at parish functions; and a statement on treatment of people with AIDS.

But perhaps the most important function of the council has been to initiate organized planning for the future of the diocese. This has entailed formulation of a mission statement, proposing specific goals to be submitted to the biennial assemblies which the council organizes, and annual review of budget priorities in conjunction with the diocesan finance council.

When Bishop Povish recently announced that he is retiring at the end of 1995, he said that two of the more memorable accomplishments in his twenty-five years as bishop of Lansing were the establishment of the pastoral council and inauguration of the diocesan assemblies. We are hopeful that his successor will continue to support these excellent programs.

JOHN P. KAVANAGH
Lansing, Mich.

It's the ratio that counts

David R. Carlin, Jr., thinks the concept of a "priest shortage" makes no sense unless we have a "right number" in mind ["On the Way to the Altar," October 20].

The precise number is irrelevant, once one admits that the priest-layperson ratio is too low to provide the faithful weekly access to the celebration of the Eucharist.

Already, SWAP (Sunday Worship in the Absence of a Priest) liturgies are springing up in the United States. While these lay-led services provide Communion from consecrated bread saved from an earlier Mass, the eucharistic prayer is omitted. This is a pale response to our Lord's directive, "Do this in memory of me."

The ranks of American Catholics have grown 15 percent over the past ten years. Sociologist Richard Schoenherr estimates that ten years from now the priestly ranks will have fallen from 35,000 in the mid-60s to about 21,000. We are hardly facing a mere shortage; we are barreling headlong into a full-blown crisis.

As Father Norman Rotert of the Kansas City-Saint Joseph diocese has said, "We must celebrate the Eucharist or we will die."

GREG BROWN
Aliquippa, Pa.

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ONE GLANCE

Denise Blue

It was payday for the homeless: food stamps and welfare checks had arrived. For a few days, we would eat, drink, and be merry, freed from the onerous task of asking for spare change. We knew that our prosperity was temporary, but for the moment, we would celebrate.

We took our food and drink to a public park and sat in the pergola, feeling grand, surveying the town below us. By midafternoon, the police arrived. "We've had complaints," said one. "Move along or you'll go to jail." The order was neither unexpected nor unusual. To stop anywhere was risky: the sight of us disturbed people. However, that day it did not seem normal to be shooed away. "I'm Doctor Blue," I said, extending my hand. "My colleagues and I are researching the effects of homelessness. I'd be happy to reassure anyone who has complained that we intend no harm." Startled, the police consulted with each other and left.

I was startled too. The person I had been years before had arisen and asserted that, of course, we could use the park. My certainty had convinced the police; there, for a moment, two very different worlds had intersected.

I had once been a professional person—a researcher, college teacher, and free-lance editor—but had left that world to become a street person, an abrupt career change that lasted ten years. One day it had occurred to me that I no longer wanted to strive. Why struggle? I wondered. Why pay rent? Why impress? Why succeed? Why not give it all up? So I did. I observed street people to discover how they managed to do without home, job, family, possessions, and live day-to-day. In the process, I became one.

Each day, street people begin with nothing and make something from it. Where most people see wilderness, they see potential shelter. Where most see trash, they see beautiful or useful objects. Where most see lost souls, they see people with stories to tell, jokes to make, songs to sing. It is a different world that makes sense only on its own terms.

In those years, my thought patterns, appearance, and behavior changed. For sleeping, I found abandoned cars, shrubbery, freeway off-ramps. For eating, I found dumpsters and soup kitchens. For companionship, I discovered that I was one of many. People who had been invisible to me now became my peers. But I soon discovered that I'd become invisible to those who lived in my former world. I'd watch them pass by, dressed up, hurrying to work or to shop, and although we walked the same streets, they'd become alien creatures who were adept at not seeing me.

My demand in the park that we be treated as citizens worked just that once. I was new to the town and had not yet accumulated the tickets for loitering, drinking, and public disturbance that the homeless collect daily. Soon I became familiar to the police and was chased away from the parks, wakened in the night, taken to jail: normalcy reestablished itself.

What I had imagined would be a life of freedom, filled with carefree hoboes laughing over campfires, became a constricting existence: cold, hunger, violence, rejection, a continual moving on. The homeless world closed in on me and it became impossible to conceive of escape.

One morning, after collecting a welfare check, I boarded a bus for another park where a group of us planned to pool our income. On the bus, I grabbed a pole and glanced at a woman across from me who was dressed for work. As she returned my look, her expression changed to one of shock, pain, and grief. I realized she was showing how she felt about me, a homeless stranger, and that I had not been *seen* that way for a long time. Through her eyes, I saw myself: dirty, tired, very thin, half my face bruised. "There is something wrong here," said her look, and it registered within me. Then she closed her eyes for a moment and I knew she was praying for me. I clutched her prayer as tightly as I did the pole, wondering if I could ride it as if it too were a bus.

When I reached the park, the usual crowd was not there. Instead, a deep calm surrounded me like a shield, and its protective presence allowed me to walk away. In the days and years that followed, I renewed contact with family, returned to teaching and writing, rebuilt a life.

Yet it was while living in the homeless world that I experienced what power there is in a moment of compassion. □

Denise Blue *lives in South Pasadena, California.*

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Index to Volume CXXII

January 13, 1995, to December 15, 1995

Articles and Poetry

Alleva, Richard ..... It's time to take sides 16:21 S 22
Alperin, Lee ..... Tell me in my ear, teacher 8:8 Ap 21
Alvare, Helen ..... Religion & the media 4:35 Fe 24
Baker, William ..... Religion & the media 4:40 Fe 24
Baldwin, Tryon ..... This gig's for you 16:31 S 22
Balmer, Randall ..... Religion & the media 4:41 Fe 24
Banki, Judith ..... Religion & the media 4:45 Fe 24
Barnett, Victoria J. ..... Growing up in America 3:6 Fe 10
Bauerschmidt, Frederick C.
..... Liturgical rites & wrongs 20:14 N 17
Bauman, Eric ..... Conversion on the job 15:14 S 8
Baumann, Paul ..... Signs & disguises 2:18 Ja 27
Where symbols really matter 2:21 Ja 27
An editorial dissent 10:4 My 19
Hitting bottom 11:5 Je 5
Critics' choices for Christmas 21:29 D 1
Bethune, Adé ..... A way of life in old age 12:14 Je 16
Bishop, Jordan ..... Separation anxiety 21:8 D 1
Blue, Denise ..... One glance 22:25 D 15
Broderick, Bill ..... Does your diocese have a council? 18:12 O 20
Buckley, Francis J. ..... Ties that bind (& knot) 1:6 Ja 13
Buell, John ..... Setting a positive agenda 10:7 My 19
Burke, Dennis ..... Why priests can't preach 7:15 Ap 7
Byrne, Katharine ..... Taking umbrage 1:30 Ja 13
Callahan, Sidney ..... Cockroaches aren't God 1:8 Ja 13
The cognitive dissonance of Murray & Herrnstein 3:14 Fe 10
Filling in the gaps 6:6 Mr 24
The thirst for revenge 12:8 Je 16
Let a smile be your ontology 17:7 O 6
The trouble with angels 21:7 D1
Carlin, David R., Jr. ..... A dream deferred 2:6 Ja 27
Democracy's future 7:8 Ap 7
There are no single issues 10:9 My 19
Beliefs matter 13:9 Jl 14
A liberal Catholic taxonomy 16:8 S 22
On the way to the altar 18:6 O 20
Why Farrakhan repels 20:7 N 17
Cort, John C. ..... God is not an It 20:17 N 17
Cunningham, Lawrence S.
..... Alone with God, and everybody 21:31 D 1
Dardess, George ..... When a Christian chants the Qur'an 1:11 Ja 13
Dart, John ..... Religion & the media 4:31 Fe 24
Day, Thomas ..... A failing star system 20:11 N 17
Dionne, E. J. ..... Religion & the media 4:26 Fe 24
The political crisis 9:11 My 5
Is there a Catholic vote? 9:12 My 5
Why we need a second party 18:8 O 20
Donahue, Charles, Jr.
..... Theology, law & women's ordination 11:11 Je 2
Donahue, Hugh Carter ..... Keep the 'public' in PBS 13:7 Jl 14
Doyle, Brian ..... A day off, with twins 2:31 Ja 27
An eye on history 14:14 Ag 18
Dreier, Peter ..... What Farrakhan left out 22:10 D 15
Dunlop, John ..... Protestant Ireland 9:6 My 5
Eastland, Terry ..... Religion & the media 4:33 Fe 24
Egan, Keith J.
..... Catherine & Teresa: Doctors of the church 20:10 N 17
Elie, Paul ..... Who, what, where, when, but why? 10:23 My 19
Mass in ordinary 20:9 N 17
Englund, Steven ..... Provocateur or prophet? 17:12 O 6
Ferkiss, Victor ..... Strong winds from D.C. 12:4 Je 16
Ferner, Mike ..... School lunches torpedoed 6:4 Mr 24
Feuerherd, Peter ..... The canary report 19:7 N 3
Fischel, Jack ..... Strange "Bell" fellows 3:16 Fe 10
Fisher, James ..... Vox populi 6:18 S 22
FitzPatrick, P. J. ..... Signs & disguises 2:18 Ja 27
Fleet, Robert ..... A smile is their umbrella 4:6 Fe 24
Being sick in America 12:11 Je 16
The underworld in Russia 18:9 O 20
Is Poland going Communist? 22:8 D 15
Fuerst, J. S. ..... Costa Rica 17:10 O 6
Gaffney, Edward McGlynn Jr.
..... At Jefferson's university 8:6 Ap 21
Clinton's green thumb 9:6 My 5
The voice from the pulpit 11:8 Je 2
The neutering of religion 15:8 S 8
The poor need lawyers 17:9 O 6
Gallagher, Jean ..... Particular Annunciation: a poem 6:17 Mr 24
Gans, Herbert J. ..... 2015: Our customer problem & yours 15:30 S 8
Garry, Patrick M. ..... A different voice 6:17 Mr 24
Garvey, John ..... Doubling the wager 1:9 Ja 13
Commercials 3:7 Fe 10
When a child dies 6:7 Mr 24
Christianity isn't 'spiritual' 9:8 My 5
What Tina hath wrought 12:9 Je 16
Whistle while you work 15:10 S 8
Putting on the mind of Christ 17:8 O 6
Race & the Simpson verdict 19:6 N 3
The earth is flat 22:7 D15
Garvey, Michael O. ..... Vox populi 16:16 S 22
Gaudiani, Claire L. ..... A U.N. focus on poverty 8:4 Ap 21
Gerner, George W.
..... Catholics & the 'religious right' 9:15 My 5
Godfrey, A. W. ..... The way we really were 4:62 Fe 24
Goldin, Milton
..... The synagogue at Liptovsky Mikulas 13:15 Jl 14
Gonzalez-Crussi, F. ..... Microcosm in a bottle 18:16 O 20
Good, George ..... Change of life: a poem 15:15 S 8
Grayson, George W. ..... Follow that peso 5:4 Mr10
Guillory, Ferrel ..... The right hand of God 2:4 Ja 27
Gunter, Sally ..... Maximum speed, minimum pay 15:16 S 8
Guroian, Vigen
..... The new nationalism & the gospel witness 13:11 Jl 14
Harris, Joseph Claude
..... How to pay for Catholic schools 17:19 O 6
Hagen, John D., Jr. ..... It's time to take sides 16:19 S 22
Hampl, Patricia ..... Critics' choices for Christmas 21:20 D 1
Hehir, J. Bryan ..... The act of disagreeing 5:7 Mr 10
Get a (culture of) life 10:8 My 19
The lessons of World War II 14:9 Ag 18
Hill, Mary Crockett
..... Tangles Not to Be Undone: a poem 4:11 Fe 24
Houghton, William ..... Apprenticeship 11:31 Je 2
Hoyt, Robert G. ..... Word maestro at play 13:4 Jl 14

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Huerta, Alberto.....But the 'Indios' remember 5:5 Mr 10
A toast 13:22 Jl 14
Hutchins, Robert M.....Make it a habit 8:14 Ap 21
Hynes, Joseph.....Midwestern loneliness 19:8 N 3
Idinopulus, Thomas A.....A three-sided peace 12:5 Je 16
Imbelli, Robert P.....Prague spring 14:7 Ag 18
Isbell, Harold.....John Logan's 'Confessions' 10:14 My 19
Johnson, Bud.....April 1, 2004 3:30 Fe 10
FDR: His pervasive presence 9:30 My 5
Johnson, Luke Timothy.....Who Is Jesus? 22:12 D 15
Jones, Robert C.....If Dr. William Carlos Williams instead of Mr. John Milton Had Written 'Paradise Lost': a poem 11:12 Je 2
Jordan, Patrick.....The cardinal rule 7:4 Ap 7
In the bomb we trust 14:5 Ag 18
Keen, Suzanne.....Vox populi 16:17 S 22
Kelly, Mary Pat.....Divorce in a divided land 22:9 D 15
Koller, Christopher F.....Reforming health care 21:10 D 1
Komonchak, Joseph A.....A hero of Vatican II 21:15 D 1
Lauder, Robert E.....Still awestruck 18:31 O 20
Leckey, Dolores R.....A bishop who cooked 7:7 Ap 7
Lehmann, Daniel.....Religion & the media 4:21 Fe 24
Leo, John.....Religion & the media 4:41 Fe 24
Levesque, Charles W.
.....Is Quebec becoming two nations? 21:9 D 1
Lewis, Steven.....The remains of one man's day 12:31 Je 16
Little, Geraldine C.....First Time: a poem 8:16 Ap 21
Loebs, Bruce.....Hiroshima & Nagasaki 14:11 Ag 18
Loxterkamp, David
.....In the midst of death, we are in life 15:11 8
MacGloin, T. P.....Study? Here? This is a dorm! 8:30 Ap 21
Maloney, Daniel J.
.....No admittance without children 13:30 Jl 14
Maniscalco, Francis J.
.....Religion & the media (postscript) 4:49 Fe 24
Marin, Carol.....Religion & the media 4:19 Fe 24
Marino, Gordon D.....The epidemic of forgiveness 6:9 Mr 24
Marty, Martin.....Religion & the media 4:25 Fe 24
McCarthy, Abigail.....Has anybody thought of jobs? 4:7 Fe 24
Cyber campus? 7:9 Ap 7
The miracle man 9:9 My 5
Keep on truckin' 13:8 Jl 14
Pulling the rug out 16:7 S 22
Going it alone 18:7 O 20
Christmas lists 22:6 D 15
McCarthy, Eugene.....Elegy for the evening news 19:30 N 3
McCloskey, Liz Leibold.....Orphaned at birth 2:8 Ja 27
Getting practical about peace 11:9 Je 2
McConnell, Frank.....It's time to take sides 16:23 S 22
McDonough, Peter.....Bumblebee of the South 4:4 Fe 24
McManus, Frederick R.....Shared treasure 1:7 Ja 13
McManus, Leo E.....Fallout from pedophilia 5:6 Mr 10
McMullen, Richard E.....Pills and Tablets: a poem 4:12 Fe 24
McNamara, Patrick H.....All is not lost 8:12 Ap 21
Meilaender, Gilbert.....Critics' choices for Christmas 21:25 D 1
Miles, Jack....A literary reading of the Book of Proverbs 5:9Mr 10
Critics' choices for Christmas 21:20 D 1
Mitchell, Nathan D.....Who is at the table? 2:10 Ja 27
Moore, Francis E.....What goes around... 17 31 O 6
Moore, Kathleen Dean
.....Poking around: The how & the why 5:30 Mr 10
Murphy, Patrick T.....Preserving chaos 6:12 Mr 24
Neff, David.....Religion & the media 4:20 Fe 24
Nilson, Jon.....John Paul II, ecumenist 13:5 Jl 14
Other voices 13:6 Jl 14
Nixon, John, Jr.....The Precisionist: a poem 19:15 N 3
O'Brien, Dennis.....Going which way? 16:10 S 22
O'Connell, David
.....François Mauriac's 'Woman of the Pharisees' 11:20 Je 2
O'Rourke, David.....Barefoot-ingenue-with-incense 20:31 N 17
Otto, Randall E.....Bottom of the slope 10:5 My 19
Pampusch, Anita M.....Critics' choices for Christmas 21:26 D 1
Partridge, Dixie.....Early Memory: a poem 20:22 N 17
Pilgrimage: a poem 20:22 N 17
Phayer, Michael.....Saving Jews was her passion 14:19 Ag 18
Policano, Joseph D.....Cuba embraces the dollar 15:6 S 8
Porter, Anne.....Summer Cottage: a poem 12:15 Je 16
A Safe Neighborhood: a poem 13:16 Jl 14
Five Wishes: a poem 18:14 O 20
Prendergast, William B.....Shifting allegiance 1:4 Ja 13
Prevost, Gary.....Investing in Cuba 15:7 S 8
Reiland, Ralph R.....Mixing religion & business 11:6 Je 2
Roberts, Cokie.....Religion & the media 4:32 Fe 24
Rodden, John.....Going bananas 6:4 Mr 24
Liberation from lies 7:5 Ap 7
Root, William Pitt
.....Courage: Revising the Text: a poem 1:13 Ja 13
In the House of Denial: a poem 6:14 Mr 24
Roy, Ann.....A crack between the worlds 18:13 O 20
Russert, Tim.....Religion & the media 4:31 Fe 24
Schickel, William J.....Time travelers 11:7 Je 2
Schilling, Timothy P.....Trying to see straight 19:14 N 3
Schoenherr, Richard A.....Numbers don't lie 7:11 Ap 7
Schroth, Raymond.....Hanoi's victory undone? 14:5 Ag 18
Senser, Robert A.....Will China kick the habit? 9:7 My 5
Loaded at the top 21:12 D 1
Sheed, Wilfrid.....Take a walk in my pajamas 4:9 Fe 24
Shelley, Thomas J.....'God does not need our lies' 7:31 Ap 7
Siegel, Joan I.....Dance of the Sanderlings: a poem 10:22 My 19
Later: a poem 10:22 My 19
Memorial: a poem 10:22 My 19
My Mother at Eigthy-One: a poem 10:22 My 19
Hiroshima 1991: a poem 14:18 Ag 18
Simpson, William.....God's battered body 12:18 Je 16
Skillin, Edward S.....A friend passes 13:5 Jl 14
Skloot, Floyd.....Thorns into feathers 3:9 Fe 10
Steinfels, Margaret O'Brien
.....The woman behind the scenes 12:7 Je 16
Steinfels, Peter.....Signs & numbers 2:11 Ja 27
Religion & the media 4:14 Fe 24
Religion & the media 4:40 Fe 24
Stepanchev, Stephen
.....The Church in the Desert: a poem 7:20 Ap 7
Sulzman, Susannah.....Harvesting the Skeptics: a poem 22:11 D 15
Swick, Thomas.....Critics' choices for Christmas 21:23 D 1
Swidler, Leonard.....An Americanist hero 7:18 Ap 7
Szpak, Alina.....Is Poland going Communist? 22:8 D 15
Thibodeau, Ralph.....'Chant around the clock' 6:15 Mr 24
Praying & singing the new psalter 20:17 N 17
Thompson, Cliff.....Inventing our names, our selves 6:30 Mr 24
Veenendaal, Cornelia.....The Good Samaritan: a poem 15:12 S 8
Westerfield, Nancy G.....Salad Ladies: a poem 2:14 Ja 27
Goes with the Territory: a poem 3:10 Fe 10
Know thine enemy 14:30 Ag 18
Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe
.....Critics' choices for Christmas 21:24 D 1
Wiggins, Anthony A.....A super superego 10:46 My 19
Williams, Mary Alice.....Religion & the media 4:42 Fe 24
Winters, Mary.....Presentation Counts: a poem 20:16 N 17
Worth, Robert.....Where atheists walk on coals 11:17 Je 2
Vox populi 16 17 S 22
Wycliff, Don.....Religion & the media 4:19 Fe 24
Affirmative on affirmative action 10:11 My 19
Why Farrakhan appeals 20:8 N 17
Youkey, Bill.....Invitation to a beheading 3:4 Fe10
Zahn, Gordon C.....An incomplete confession 22:15 D 15

Book Reviews

Absolute Truths:
By Susan Howatch.....Celia Wren 12:22 Je 16
Aids, Gays, and the American Catholic Church:
By Richard L. Smith.....James L. Nash 6:22 Mr 24
An Altogether Different Language:
By Anne Porter.....Marie Ponsot 20:23 N 17
American Journey of Eric Sevareid, The:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By Raymond A. Schroth.....Robert Schmuhl 13:23 Jl 14
Asi'Es:
Edited by Arturo Perez et al.
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 18:28 O 20
Assurance of Things Hoped For:
By Avery Dulles, S.J.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 10:38 My 19
At Peace with All Their Neighbors:
By William W. Warner.....Abigail McCarthy 10:37 My 19
Bell Curve, The:
By Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein
.....Sidney Callahan 3:14 Fe 10
Between Friends:
Edited by Carol Brightman.....Stephanie Harrington 18:25 O 20
Beyond Naive Belief:
By Paul E. Dinter .....Dennis O'Brien 5:20 Mr 10
Big as Life:
By Rand Richards Cooper .....Elizabeth Beverly 17:24 O 6
A Big-Enough God:
By Sara Maitland .....Luke Timothy Johnson 19:22 N 3
Breakfast at the Victory:
By James P. Carse.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 18:28 O 20
Brother and Lover:
By Brian Patrick McGuire
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 7:28 Ap 7
Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture:
Edited by Karla Poewe.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 1:26 Ja 13
Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century:
By Timothy Yates.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 1:25 Ja 13
Christianity: Essence, History, and Future
By Hans Küng .....Lawrence S. Cunningham 22:22 D 15
A Civil Action:
By Jonathan Harr.....Suzanne Keen 19:18 N 3
Closing Time:
By Joseph Heller.....Daniel M. Murtaugh 4:57 Fe 24
Cold Snap:
By Thom Jones .....Elizabeth Beverly 17:24 O 6
Confronting Poverty:
Edited by Sheldon H. Danziger, Gary D. Sandefus,
and Daniel H. Weinberg .....John Feffer 12:27 Je 16
Congregation:
By Gary Dorsey .....Paul Elie 10:23 My 19
Conor:
By Donald Harman Akenson .....Gerald J. Russello 6:23 Mr 24
Conor Cruise O'Brien:
Edited by Donald Harman Akenson
.....Gerald J. Russello 6:23 Mr 24
Conversations on Mind, Matter, and Mathematics:
By Jean-Pierre Changeux and Alain Connes
.....Robert J. White 18:27 O 20
Copper Crucible:
By Jonathan Rosenblum .....John Buell 12:25 Je 16
Crossing the Threshold of Hope:
By Pope John Paul II.....Peter Steinfels 1:21 Ja 13
Cunning Man, The:
By Robertson Davies .....Celia Wren 15:25 S 8
Dead Sea Scrolls Today, The:
By James VanderKam .....Lawrence S. Cunningham 7:27 Ap 7
Death and Deliverance:
By Michael Burleigh.....Daniel Callahan 15:20 S 8
Death of Common Sense, The:
By Philip K. Howard .....Mary Ann Glendon 6:20 Mr 24
Death of Satan, The:
By Andrew Delbanco.....Robert Worth 20:26 N 17
Deep River:
By Shusaku Endo .....Patricia O'Connell 10:34 My 19
Demanding Democracy:
By Robert Schmuhl .....Timothy A. Byrnes 8:22 Ap 21
Democracy on Trial:
By Jean Bethke Elshtain.....David McCabe 3:18 Fe 10
Devil in the New World, The:
By Fernando Cervantes.....Carl L. Bankston III 9:24 My 5
Dictionary of Christian Art:
By Diane Apostolos-Cappadona
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 18:30 O 20
Ecological Challenge, The:
Edited by Richard N. Fragomeni and
John T. Pawlikowski.....William Simpson 12:18 Je 16
Embracing Earth:
Edited by Albert J. LaChance and John E. Carrol
.....William Simpson 12:18 Je 16
Empire of Fashion, The:
By Gilles Lipovetsky.....James T. Fisher 9:21 My 5
Ethical Primate, The:
By Mary Midgley.....Dennis O'Brien 11:26 Je 2
Eucharistic Presence:
By Robert Sokolowski.....John Garvey 2:26 Ja 27
Evelyn Waugh:
By Selina Hastings .....Robert Murray Davis 10:35 My 19
Felicia's Journey:
By William Trevor .....Sara Maitland 10:31 My 19
Final Martyrs, The:
By Shusaku Endo .....Patricia O'Connell 10:35 My 19
A Fire in the Bones:
By Albert J. Raboteau .....Don Wycliff 15:23 S 8
Fire in the Mind:
By George Johnson .....Chet Raymo 22:20 D 15
Formation of Hell, The:
By Alan E. Bernstein.....Carl L. Bankston III 9:24 My 5
Ghosts of Manila:
By James Hamilton-Paterson
.....Edward T. Wheeler 8:26 Ap 21
God: A Biography
By Jack Miles.....Luke Timothy Johnson 10:32 My 19
Graham Greene:
Edited by A. F. Cassis .....Alberto Huerta 13:20 Jl 14
Graham Greene:
By Leopoldo Durán .....Alberto Huerta 13:20 Jl 14
Graham Greene:
By Michael Shelden .....Alberto Huerta 13:20 Jl 14
Great Christian Thinkers:
By Hans Küng .....Lawrence S. Cunningham 7:29 Ap 7
Growth of Mysticism, The:
By Bernard McGinn
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 11:28 Je 2
HarperCollins Book of Prayers, The:
Compiled by Robert Van De Weyer
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 10:40 My 19
Her Share of the Blessings:
By Ross Shepard Kraemer
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 16:28 S 22
Hispanic Condition:
By Ilan Stavans.....Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo 15:22 S 8
Holy Things:
By Gordon W. Lathrop ....Lawrence S. Cunningham 1:28 Ja 13
Hospital:
By Sydney Lewis .....Patricia O'Connell 3:20 Fe 10
How I Pray:
Edited by Jim Castelli.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 6:26 Mr 24
Hungry Soul, The:
By Leon R. Kass .....Mary Douglas 5:22 Mr 10
I Am a Happy Theologian:
By Edward Schillebeeckx
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 10:39 My 19
I Am My Body:
By Elizabeth Moltmann-Wendel
.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 22:23 D 15
In Good Hands:
By Charles Fish .....Wilson Carey McWilliams 19:24 N 3
In Her Words:
Edited by Amy Ogden .....Lawrence S. Cunningham 1:28 Ja 13
In Pharaoh's Army:
By Tobias Wolff .....Michael O. Garvey 10:30 My 19
Independence Day:
By Richard Ford.....Raymond A. Schroth 17:27 O 6
Intimate Enemies:
By Meron Benvenisti.....Jo-Ann Mort 19:25 N 3
An Introduction to New Testament Christology:
By Raymond E. Brown.....Lawrence S. Cunningham 11:29 Je 2

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Invisible God, The:
By Paul Corby ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 16:29 S 22
Jesus:
By Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza ..... Dennis M. Doyle 5:18 Mr 10
Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship:
By Marcus J. Borg ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 1:27 Ja 13
John Dewey and the High Tide of American Liberalism:
By Alan Ryan ..... Jean Bethke Elshtain 14:26 Ag 18
John Logan: The Collected Poems:
By John Logan ..... Harold Isbell 10:14 My 19
John Logan: The Collected Fiction
By John Logan ..... Harold Isbell 10:14 My 19
Joy of the Gospel, The:
By Carlo Maria Martini .... Lawrence S. Cunningham 6:25 Mr 24
Jury, The:
By Jeffrey Abramson ..... Winnifred Fallers Sullivan 9:26 My 5
Kingdom of Matthia, The:
By Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz
..... Andrew Delbanco 8:19 Ap 21
Ladder of Years:
By Ann Tyler ..... Gene H. Bell-Villada 12:21 Je 16
Last Great Frenchman, The:
By Charles Williams ..... Steven Englund 20:28 N 17
Last Three Minutes, The:
By Paul Davies ..... Nancy M. Haegel 8:24 Ap 21
Letters of Hildegard of Bingen (Volume I), The:
Translated and edited by Joseph L. Baird
and Radd K. Ehrman ..... Lawrence S.Cunningham 10:41 My 19
Life of Graham Greene:
By Norman Sherry ..... Alberto Huerta 13:20 Jl 14
Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time:
By Marcus Borg ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 7:27 Ap 7
Modern Catholic Encyclopedia, The:
Edited by Michael Glazier and Monika Hellwig
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 11:30 Je 2
Moral Animal, The:
By Robert Wright ..... Dennis O'Brien 11:26 Je 2
My Song Is of Mercy:
Edited by Michael Downey
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 18:29 O 20
Mysticism, Death, and Dying:
By Christopher Nugent .... Lawrence S. Cunningham 18:29 O 20
Origin of the Universe, The:
By John D. Barrow ..... Nancy M. Haegel 8:24 Ap 21
Origins of Christian Morality, The:
By Wayne A. Meeks
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 6:25 Mr 24
Overcoming Law:
By Richard Posner ..... Daniel J. Morrissey 13:24 Jl 14
Pattern of Redemption:
By Edward T. Oakes ..... Robert P. Imbelli 7:24 Ap 7
Paying the Words Extra:
By Winnifred Fallers Sullivan ..... John T. McGreevy 12:24 Je 16
Pope John Paul II:
By Tad Szulc ..... Steven Englund 14:23 Ag 18
Pope John Paul II and the Church:
By Peter Hebblethwaite ... Lawrence S. Cunningham 22:22 D 15
Populist Persuasion, The:
By Michael Kazin
..... Wilson Carey McWilliams 11:24 Je 2
Postethnic America:
By David A. Hollinger ..... John T. McGreevy 18:23 O 20
Postmodern Theologies:
By Terrence W. Tilley et al.
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 22:23 D 15
Power of Their Ideas, The:
By Deborah Meier ..... William M. Sullivan 18:24 O 20
A Preface to Mark:
By Christopher Bryan ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 7:28 Ap 7
Preserving the Creation:
Edited by Kevin W. Irwin and Edmund Pelligrino
..... William Simpson 12:18 Je 16
Psalms for Morning and Evening Prayer:
By the International Commission on English
in the Liturgy (ICEL) ..... John C. Cort 20:17 N 17
Psalter, The:
By the International Commission on English
in the Liturgy (ICEL) ..... Ralph Thibodeau 20:17 N 17
Race and Culture:
By Thomas Sowell ..... Don Wycliff 1:22 Ja 13
Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang:
Edited by J. E. Lighter ..... Nicholas R. Clifford 4:56 Fe 24
Reason in the Balance:
By Phillip Johnson ..... Terry Scambray 20:24 N 17
Refiner's Tale, The:
By John L. Brooke ..... Martin E. Marty 5:26 Mr 10
Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft:
Edited by Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson
..... James Finn 17:28 O 6
Religion and American Education:
By Warren A. Nord ..... John T. McGreevy 12:24 Je 16
Revolt of the Elites, The:
By Christopher Lasch ..... Elizabeth Fox-Genovese 6:19 Mr 24
Riding the Rap:
By Elmore Leonard ..... Robert Worth 14:24 Ag 18
Robert Hovda:
Edited by John F. Baldovin ..... Karen Sue Smith 7:25 Ap 7
Robert Louis Stevenson:
By Frank McLynn ..... Suzanne Keen 9:22 My 5
Scrambling for Protection:
By Patrick M. Garry ..... Timothy A. Byrnes 8:22 Ap 21
Self-Rule:
By Robert H. Wiebe ..... Alan Wolfe 13:19 Jl 14
Sex and Suits:
By Anne Hollander ..... James T. Fisher 9:21 My 5
Sign of the Cross, The:
By Colm Tóibín ..... Edward T. Wheeler 19:20 N 3
Sitting Still:
By Patricia Hart Clifford
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 18:28 O 20
Statecraft and Stagecraft:
By Robert Schmuhl ..... Timothy A. Byrnes 8:22 Ap 21
Subversive Virtue:
By James A. Francis ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 16:28 S 22
Taking Care of Our Own:
By Susan Garrett ..... Patricia O'Connell 3:20 Fe 10
Teacher of His Heart, The:
By Norbert Nguyen-Van-Khnh
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 16:29 S 22
Theology of the Hammer, The:
By Millard Fuller ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 6:27 Mr 24
They Cried to the Lord:
By Patrick D. Miller ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 6:26 Mr 24
To Love Fasting:
By Adalbert de Vogue'
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 7:28 Ap 7
To Renew America:
By Newt Gingrich ..... James Duffy 17:26 O 6
A Tremor of Bliss:
Edited by Paul Elie ..... Anna Harrison 5:24 Mr 10
Triune God, The:
By Thomas Marsh ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 10:39 My 19
Underground Stream, The:
By Nancylee Novell Jonza ..... Robert Coles 10:28 My 19
Vatican II:
By M. Basil Pennington .... Lawrence S. Cunningham 10:40 My 19
Virtually Normal:
By Andrew Sullivan ..... Margaret O'Brien Steinfels 16:24 S 22
We, The Jury:
By Stephen J. Adler ..... Winnifred Fallers Sullivan 9:26 My 5
Winds of the Spirit:
By Peter C. Hodgson ..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 1:26 Ja 13
Women's Prayer Companion, The:
By the Carmelites of Indianapolis
..... Lawrence S. Cunningham 10:40 My 19
Worldviews and Ecology:
Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John A. Grimm
..... William Simpson 12:18 Je 16

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Index of Principal Subjects in Articles, Editorials, and Letters

Abortion 2:3 Ja 27; 3:2 Fe 10; 5:2 Mr 10; 5:7 Mr 10; 8:3 Ap 21; 10:8 My 19; 10:9 My 19; 12:4 Je 16; 18:16 O 20
Adams, Gerry, 9:5 My 5
Advertising, 11:5 Je 2; 16:31 S 22
Affirmative action, 10:11 My 19; 11:3 Je 2; 13:2 Jl 14; 17:29 O 6
African-Americans, 11:6 Je 2; 13:2 Jl 14; 19:7 N 3; 20:7 N 17; 20:8 N 17; 22:10 D 15
Aging, 12:14 Je 16; 13:8 Jl 14
AIDS, Gays, and the American Catholic Church, 11:2 Je 2
American Catholics and Intellectual Life, 7:31 Ap 7
Anencephalic babies, 12:4 Je 16
Angels, 21:7 D 1
Anti-Semitism, 13:15 Jl 14; 20:8 N 17
Armenian church, 13:11 Jl 14
Ashrawi, Hanan, 12:7 Je 16
Atheism, 11:17 Je 2
Atomic bomb, 14:3 Ag 18; 14:4 Ag 18; 14:5 Ag 18; 14:9 Ag 18; 14:11 Ag 18; 14:14 Ag 18; 16:2 S 22; 16:30 S 22; 16:31 S 22
Austria, 11:7 Je 2
Bananas, 6:4 Mr 24
Beijing conference, 16:6 S 22
Bell Curve, The, 3:14 Fe 10; 3:16 Fe 10; 6:28 Mr 24; 6:29 Mr 24
Benedictine monks of Santo Domingo de Silos, 6:15 Mr 24; 9:27 My 5; 10:41 My 19
Beyond Naive Belief, 7:29 Ap 7; 9:28 My 5
Bible, 5:9 Mr 10; 22:12 D 15
Book of Proverbs, The, 5:9 Mr 10
Bosnia, 13:3 Jl 14
The Boys of Saint Vincent, 5:29 Mr 10
Brazil, 4:4 Fe 24
Brown, Tina, 12:9 Je 16
Buchenwald, 7:5 Ap 7
Capitalism, 15:30 S 8; 21:12 D 1
Catholic church/Catholicism, and
  abortion, 2:3 Ja 27; 5:2 Mr 10; 5:7 Mr 10; 10:9 My 19; 6:16 S 22
  AIDS, 11:2 Je 2
  America, 7:31 Ap 7; 8:3 Ap 21; 10:8 My 19; 10:9 My 19; 16:8 S 22; 20:9 N 17
  apostolic succession, 3:2 Fe 10; 3:22 Fe 10
  bishops, 2:3 Ja 27; 22:5 D 15
  capitalism, 11:6 Je 2
  Catherine of Siena, 20:10 N 17
  cloistered monasteries, 17:31 O 6
  Commonweal, 4:61 Fe 24; 7:31 Ap 7
  Community of Sant'Egidio, 3:22 Fe 10
  culture, 8:3 Ap 21; 10:8 My 19; 11:7 Je 2
  Czech Republic, 14:7 Ag 18
  diocesan pastoral council, 18:12 O 20; 22:4 D 15
  ecumenism, 1:6 Ja 13; 1:7 Ja 13; 13:5 Jl 14; 13:6 Jl 14; 13: 6 Jl 14
  ecology, 12:18 Je 16
  education, 17:19 O 6; 19:28 N 3; 19:29 N 3
  eucharistic presence, 2:10 Ja 27; 2:11 Ja 27; 2:18 Ja 27; 5:2 Mr 10; 5:27 Mr 10; 5:28 Mr 10; 7:2 Ap 7; 9:2 My 5; 9:27 My 5
  euthanasia, 8:3 Ap 21; 10:5 My 19; 10:8 My 19
  Evangelium vitae, 8:3 Ap 21; 10:8 My 19
  faith, 1:9 Ja 13; 6:6 Mr 24; 7:29 Ap 7; 9:2 My 5; 9:8 My 5; 9:28 My 5; 10:23 My 19; 15:11 S 8; 15:14 S 8; 21:5 D 1
  French church, 17:12 O 6; 19:4 N 3
  Galileo, 2:29 Ja 27
  German bishops, 22:15 D 15
  Holocaust, 14:19 Ag 18; 22:15 D 15
  homosexuality, 11:2 Je 2
  inclusive language, 20:17 N 17; 22:2 D 15; 22:4 D 15
  infallibility, 21:5 D 1
  Ireland, 5:6 Mr 10; 22:9 D 15
  just-war teaching, 14:9 Ag 18; 16:30 S 22; 16:31 S 22
  laity and the life of faith, 7:3 Ap 7; 15:11 S 8; 15:14 S 8; 17:8 O 6; 18:12 O 20
  liberalism, 1:2 Ja 13; 10:9 My 19; 16:8 S 22; 18:4 O 20
  liturgy, 20:5 N 17; 20:31 N 17; 20:11 N 17; 20:14 N 17; 20:17 N 17; 20:17 N 17; 20:18 N 17; 22:2 D 15; 22:4 D 15
  married priests, 18:6 O 20; 20:2 N 17; 21:2 D 1; 22:24 D 15
  media, 1:2 Ja 13; 4:3 Fe 24; 4:13 Fe 24; 4:49 Fe 24; 5:2 Mr 10; 6:2 Mr 24; 7:2 Ap 7; 7:4 Ap 7; 9:28 My 5; 10:23 My 19; 12:9 Je 16; 15:28 S 8
  Ordinatio sacerdotalis, 11:11 Je 2; 15:26 S 8; 15:28 S 8; 21:5 D 1; 21:6 D 1
  ordination of women, 2:8 Ja 27; 4:2 Fe 24; 4:2 Fe 24; 11:11 Je 2; 15:26 S 8; 21:5 D 1; 21:6 D 1
  Oregon's Measure 16, 10:6 My 19
  pedophilia, 5:6 Mr 10; 5:29 Mr 10
  politics, 1:4 Ja 13; 7:30 Ap 7; 9:12 My 5; 11:8 Je 2; 12:18 Je 16; 12:29 Je 16; 12:30 Je 16; 14:29 Ag 18
  Pope John Paul II, 4:2 Fe 24; 5:28 Mr 10; 7:29 Ap 7; 8:3 Ap 21; 10:5 My 19; 10:8 My 19; 13:5 Jl 14; 17:6 O 6; 18:5 O 20; 19:4 N 3; 20:9 N 17; 21:5 D 1; 22:9 D 15
  popular culture, 16:5 S 22; 16:10 S 22; 16:16 S 22; 16:17 S 22; 16:18 S 22; 16:19 S 22; 16:21 S 22; 18:2 O 20; 18:4 O 20; 19:28 N 3
  prayer, 21:31 D 1
  preaching, 7:15 Ap 7; 10:43 My 19; 10:44 My 19; 10:45 My 19; 11:2 Je 2; 12:30 Je 16; 14:2 Ag 18
  priesthood, 2:8 Ja 27; 4:2 Fe 24; 5:6 Mr 10; 7:3 Ap 7; 7:11 Ap 7; 10:41 My 19; 10:42 My 19; 12:28 Je 16; 12:29 Je 16; 16:10 S 22; 18:5 O 20; 18:31 O 20; 20:2 N 17; 20:4 N 17; 22:24 D 15
  racism, 7:30 Ap 7
  religious conversion, 15:14 S 18; 19:4 N 3
  religious language, 20:5 N 17; 20:17 N 17; 20:18 N 17
  religious life, 1:9 Ja 13; 9:8 My 5; 10:23 My 19; 13:26 Jl 14; 15:14 S 18; 17:8 O 6
  Religious Right, 9:15 My 5; 11:2 Je 2; 12:29 Je 16; 12:30 Je 16; 14:29 Ag 18
  religious symbols, 2:10 Ja 27; 2:11 Ja 27; 2:18 Ja 27; 4:2 Fe 24; 5:2 Mr 10; 5:27 Mr 10; 5:28 Mr 10; 7:2 Ap 7
  Republicans, 1:4 Ja 13; 7:30 Ap 7; 9:12 My 5; 22:5 D 15
  schools, 17:19 O 6
  science, 2:2 Ja 27; 2:28 Ja 27; 18:16 O 20
  social issues, 5:7 Mr 10; 11:6 Je 2
  social teaching, 8:3 Ap 21; 10:8 My 19
  tax-exemption, 11:8 Je 2
  theology/church history, 1:29 Ja 13; 4:59 Fe 24; 10:8 My 19; 11:11 Je 2; 13:5 Jl 14; 15:26 S 8; 15:28 S 8; 21:5 D 1
  Teresa of Avila, 20:10 N 17
  transubstantiation, 2:18 Ja 27; 5:2 Mr 10
  Ut unum sint, 13:5 Jl 14
  Vatican II, 21:15 D 1
  vote, 9:13 My 5; 9:15 My 5
  women, 2:8 Ja 27; 4:2 Fe 24; 11:3 Je 2; 11:11 Je 2; 15:26 S 8; 20:10 N 17; 21:5 D 1
Central Intelligence Agency, 9:29 My 5
Chiapas, 5:4 Mr 10; 5:5 Mr 10
Child labor, 16:7 S 22; 18:2 O 20
Children, 2:31 Ja 27; 3:6 Fe 10; 6:3 Mr 24; 6:4 Mr 24; 6:7 Mr 24; 6:12 Mr 24; 8:8 Ap 21; 10:46 My 19; 16:7 S 22; 18:2 O 20
China, 9:7 My 5
Christian Coalition, 14:29 Ag 18
Church & state, 8:6 Ap 21; 11:8 Je 2; 15:8 S 8
Clinton, administration, 3:3 Fe 10; 9:5 My 5; 9:11 My 5; 12 4 Je 16
Clinton, Hillary, 1:2 Ja 13
Commercials, 3:7 Fe 10
Commonweal layout, 15:3 S 8; 17:2 O 6; 17:4 O 6; 22:2 D 15
Communism, 7:5 Ap 7
Community, 18:7 O 20
Congar, Yves, 21:15 D 1
Congregation, 10:23 My 19; 13:2 Jl 14; 13:26 Jl 14; 13:27 Jl 14; 13:28 Jl 14; 13:29 Jl 14
Constitution, 17:2 O 6; 17:4 O 6; 20:30 N 17
Contract with America, 5:3 Mr 10; 19:5 N 3
Costa Rica, 17:10 O 6; 18:2 O 20
Crossing the Threshold of Hope, 4:2 Fe 24; 5:28 Mr 10; 7:29 Ap 7
Cuba, 15:4 S 8; 15:7 S 8
Czech Republic, 14:7 Ag 18
Death and dying, 6:7 Mr 24; 15:11 S 8; 18:13 O 20; 18:16 O 20; 19:4 N 3
Death penalty, 3:4 Fe 10; 8:28 Ap 21; 10:3 My 19; 10:4 My 19; 12:2 Je 16; 12:8 Je 16; 14:2 Ag 18; 21:2 D 1; 21:4 D 1
Deen, Rosemary, 1:4 Ja 13
Democracy, 7:8 Ap 7; 10:2 My 19
Democrats, 9:11 My 11; 9:12 My 11; 18:8 O 20
Depression, Great, 9:9 My 5; 21:12 D 1; 22:10 D 15
Discrimination, 13:2 Jl 14; 19:7 N 3
Disney, 13:30 Jl 14; 15:10 S 8
Doyle, Kevin, 16:7 S 22
Ecofeminism, 1:8 Ja 13; 3:22 Fe 10; 12:18 Je 16
Ecumenism, 1:6 Ja 13; 1:7 Ja 13; 13:5 Jl 14
Education, 7:9 Ap 7; 8:8 Ap 21; 8:12 Ap 21; 8:14 Ap 21; 8:30 Ap 21; 10:46 My 19; 14:2 Ag 18; 14:28 Ag 18; 14:29 Ag 18
Ellis, John Tracy, 7:31 Ap 7
Embryo research, 6:29 Mr 24
England, John, 7:18 Ap 7; 11:2 Je 2
Entertainment, 13:30 Jl 14; 13:4 Jl 14; 15:10 S 8; 16:31 S 22; 17:30 O 6
Environment, 5:30 Mr 10; 12:3 Je 16; 12:4 Je 16; 12:18 Je 16
Euthanasia, 10:5 My 19; 17:4 O 6
Faith, 1:9 Ja 13
Family, 2:31 Ja 27; 6:3 Mr 24; 6:2 Mr 24; 6:12 Mr 24; 12:31 Je 16
Farrakhan, Louis, 20:6 N 17; 20:7 N 17; 20:8 N 17; 22:2 D 15; 22:10 D 15
First Amendment, 8:6 Ap 21; 15:8 S 8
Forgiveness, 6:9 Mr 24; 8:2 Ap 21
Gaillot, Bishop Jacques, 17:12 O 6; 19:4 N 3; 19:26 N 3; 19:27 N 3
Generation X, 8:12 Ap 21
Germany, 6:4 Mr 24; 7:7 Ap 7; 14:19 Ag 18
Gingrich, Newt, 21:2 D 1
Glendon, Mary Ann, 16:6 S 22
God, 5:9 Mr 10

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Graymoor Prize, 1:11 Ja 13
Greene, Graham, 13:22 Jl 14
Gregorian Chant, 6:15 Mr 24; 9:27 My 5; 10:41 My 19
Guatemala, 9:29 My 5
Hassler, Jon, 19:8 N 3
Health care, 12:11 Je 16; 15:2 S 8; 15:26 S 8; 21:10 D 1
Hebblethwaite, Peter, 2:4 Ja 27
Helms, Jesse, 2:4 Ja 27
Hiroshima & Nagasaki, 14:3 Ag 18; 14:9 Ag 18; 14:11 Ag 18; 14:14 Ag 18; 16:2 S 22; 16:30 S 22; 16:31 S 22
Holocaust, 14:19 Ag 18
Homosexuality, 20:2 N 17
Human Rights, 9:29 My 5; 16:7 S 22; 18:2 O 20
Illness, 3:9 Fe 10; 4:9 Fe 24; 12:11 Je 16
Immigration, 1:3 Ja 13; 6:29 Mr 24
India, 11:17 Je 2; 18:2 O 20
Individualism, 18:7 O 20
Integration, 2:6 Ja 27; 6:2 Mr 24
Interview with the Vampire, 3:22 Fe 10
Invisible world, 6:7 Mr 24
Ireland, 5:6 Mr 10; 9:5 My 5; 9:6 My 5; 22:9 D 15
  filmmaking, 6:17 Mr 24
Irish-Americans, 4:62 Fe 24
Islam, 1:11 Ja 13
Israel, 12:5 Je 16
Japan, 14:11 Ag 18; 14:14 Ag 18; 14:30 Ag 18; 16:2 S 22; 16:30 S 22; 16:31 S 22
Kenny, Michael, 7:7 Ap 7; 10:2 My 19
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 2:26 Ja 27; 22:10 D 22
Labor, 4:7 Fe 24; 11:31 Je 2; 13:29 Jl 14; 15:10 S 8; 15:16 S 8; 15:30 S 8; 16:7 S 22; 18:2 O 20; 21:12 D 1
  unions, 15:3 S 8; 22:10 D 15
Latin America, 4:4 Fe 24
Law, 11:8 Je 2; 17:2 O 6; 17:9 O 6; 20:4 N 17
Legal aid, 17:9 O 6; 20:4 N 17; 20:30 N 17
Liberals, 6:12 Mr 24
Logan, John, 10:14 My 19
Mankind Quarterly, 3:16 Fe 10; 6:28 Mr 24; 6:29 Mr 24
A Marginal Jew, 4:59 Fe 24; 4:60 Fe 24; 4:61 Fe 24
Mauriac, François, 11:20 Je 2
McGaw, Sister Martha Mary, 13:5 Jl 14
McNamara, Robert S., 9:3 My 5
Media, 4:3 Fe 24; 4:13 Fe 24; 6:2 Mr 24; 7:2 Ap 7; 9:28 My 5; 10:23 My 19; 12:9 Je 16; 13:2 Jl 14; 13:26 Jl 14; 19:30 N 3
Medicare, 17:5 O 6; 21:4 D 1
Medicine, 6:29 Mr 24; 12:4 Je 16; 12:11 Je 16; 15:2 S 8; 17:5 O 6; 18:16 O 20; 21:10 D 1
Men, 12:31 Je 16
Mexico, 5:4 Mr 10; 5:5 Mr 10; 18:13 O 20
Middle East, 12:5 Je 16; 12:7 Je 16
Million Man March, 20:7 N 17; 20:8 N 17; 22:tk D 15
National Right to Life Committee, 3:2 Fe 10; 5:2 Mr 10
Nationalism, 13:11 Jl 14
Natural Born Killers, 16:19 S 22
New York City, 11:5 Je 2; 16:31 S 22; 18:5 O 20; 19:7 N 3
The *New Yorker*, 12:9 Je 16
Northern Ireland, 9:5 My 5; 9:6 My 5
O'Connor, Flannery, 19:14 N 3; 21:2 D 1
Oklahoma City Bombing, 10:3 My 19
Optimism, 17:7 O 6
Panentheism, 1:8 Ja 13; 3:22 Fe 10
Peace, 11:9 Je 2; 13:3 Jl 14
Pedophilia, 5:6 Mr 10
Philanthropy, 13:8 Jl 14
Pioneer Fund, 3:16 Fe 10; 6:28 Mr 24; 6:29 Mr 24; 9:29 My 5
Piracy, 9:7 My 5
PLO, 12:5 Je 16
Popular culture, 16:7 S 22; 16:10 S 22; 16:16 S 22; 16:19 S 22; 16:31 S 22; 18:2 O 20
Poland, 4:6 Fe 24; 12:11 Je 16; 15:26 S 8; 22:8 D 15
Poverty, 6:3 Mr 24; 6:4 Mr 24; 6:12 Mr 24; 8:4 Ap 21; 8:8 Ap 21; 11:6 Je 2; 17:9 O 6; 20:4 N 17; 20:30 N 17; 22:5 D 15
Povish, Kenneth, 22:4 D 15
Priest, 9:28 My 5
Prison, 15:14 S 18
Proposition 187, 1:3 Ja 13; 6:29 Mr 24; 7:30 Ap 7
Public broadcasting, 13:7 Jl 14
Pulp Fiction, 16:19 S 22; 18:2 O 20
Quebec, 21:8 D 1; 21:9 D 1
Race, 2:6 Ja 27; 6:2 Mr 24; 10:11 My 19; 11:3 Je 2; 19:6 N 3; 19:7 N 3; 20:7 N 17
Religion & the media, 4:3 Fe 24; 4:13 Fe 24; 6:2 Mr 24; 7:2 Ap 7; 7:4 Ap 7; 9:28 My 5; 10:23 My 19; 15:28 S 8
Religious freedom, 8:6 Ap 21; 15:8 S 8
Religious Freedom Restoration Act, 15:8 S 8
Religious Right, 2:4 Ja 27; 9:15 My 5; 11:2 Je 2; 14:29 Ag 18; 14:29 Ag 18
Republicans, 1:3 Ja 13; 1:4 Ja 13; 2:4 Ja 27; 5:3 Mr 10; 9:11 My 5; 10:7 My 19; 12:4 Je 16; 13:7 Jl 14; 17:5 O 6; 19:5 N 3
Rice, Anne, 3:23 Fe 10
Rock 'n' roll, 3:2 Fe 10
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 9:9 My 5; 9:30 My 5
Russia, 18:9 O 20
Rwanda, 21:6 D 1
Saudi Arabia, 3:4 Fe 10; 8:28 Ap 21
School of the Americas, 9:4 My 5
School lunch program, 6:4 Mr 24
Science, 18:16 O 20
Serrano, Andres, 11:18 Je 2
Sheen, Fulton J., 3:2 Fe 10
Simpson, O. J., 19:6 N 3; 20:7 N 17
Slovakia, 13:15 Jl 14
Somner, Margarete, 14:19 Ag 18
Subway, 11:5 Je 2
Supreme Court, 8:6 Ap 21; 15:8 S 8; 17:2 O 6; 17:4 O 6
Sweeney, John, 22:10 D 15
Teachers, 8:8 Ap 21
Technology, 7:9 Ap 7; 13:4 Jl 14; 14:2 Ag 18; 14:28 Ag 18; 14:29 Ag 18
Television, 3:7 Fe 10
Terrorism, 10:3 My 19
Townshend, Pete, 3:2 Fe 10
Umbrage, 1:30 Ja 13
United Nations, 8:4 Ap 21; 13:3 Jl 14; 18:5 O 20
U.S.
  culture, 6:30 Mr 24; 13:30 Jl 14; 13:7 Jl 14; 16:31 S 22; 18:7 O 20
  domestic issues, 1:3 Ja 13; 2:3 Ja 27; 4:7 Fe 24; 4:62 Fe 24; 5:3 Mr 10; 6:29 Mr 24; 6:3 Mr 24; 6:12 Mr 24; 8:6 Ap 21; 8:8 Ap 21; 8:12 Ap 21; 9:3 My 5; 9:11 My 5; 9:29 My 5; 10:2 My 19; 10:3 My 19; 10:7 My 19; 10:11 My 19; 11:3 Je 2; 12:4 Je 16; 12:18 Je 16; 13:8 Jl 14; 15:3 S 8; 15:10 S 8; 15:16 S 8; 17:5 O 6; 17:9 O 6; 19:6 N 3; 20:2 N 17; 20:4 N 17; 20:30 N 17; 20:30 N 17; 21:12 D 1
  economy, 4:7 Fe 24; 15:16 S 8; 15:30 S 8
  foreign policy, 9:7 My 5; 13:3 Jl 14
  health care, 12:11 Je 16; 15:2 S 8; 15:26 S 8; 17:5 O 6; 21:10 D 1
  politics, 2:4 Ja 27; 3:30 Fe 10; 5:3 Mr 10; 6:29 Mr 24; 7:8 Ap 7; 9:11 My 5; 9:15 My 5; 10:2 My 19; 10:7 My 19; 11:3 Je 2; 13:3 Jl 14; 13:7 Jl 14; 14:29 Ag 18; 17:5 O 6; 18:8 O 20; 19:5 N 3; 21:4 D 1
  race relations, 2:6 Ja 27; 4:62 Fe 24; 6:2 Mr 24; 10:11 My 19; 19:6 N 3; 19:7 N 3; 20:7 N 17; 20:8 N 17; 22:tk D 15
  religion, 13:9 Jl 14; 15:8 S 8
Vietnam, 14:5 Ag 18; 17:4 O 6
  War, 9:3 My 5; 11:3 Je 2
Village Voice, 7:4 Ap 7
Violence, 2:3 Ja 27; 5:2 Mr 10; 10:3 My 19; 16:19 S 22
Virtually Normal, 20:2 N 17
Virtue, 8:14 Ap 21
Water quality, 12:3 Je 16
Welfare, 6:12 Mr 24; 8:2 Ap 21; 10:2 My 19; 10:7 My 19; 11:6 Je 2
Welfare reform, 6:3 Mr 24
Westerfield, Nancy, 6:28 Mr 24
Woman of the Pharisees, 11:20 Je 2
Women, 10:11 My 19
Wordzap, 13:4 Jl 14; 17:30 O 6
Work, 11:31 Je 2; 13:29 Jl 14; 15:10 S 8; 15:16 S 8; 21:12 D 1
World Conference on Religion and Peace, 11:9 Je 2
World Council of Churches, 13:6 Jl 14
World War II, 7:5 Ap 7; 9:30 My 5; 14:3 Ag 18; 14:9 Ag 18; 14:11 Ag 18; 14:14 Ag 18; 14:19 Ag 18; 14:30 Ag 18; 16:2 S 22; 16:30 S 22; 16:31 S 22
Zedillo, Ernesto Ponce de León, 5:4 Mr 10; 5:5 Mr 10

Screen, by Richard Alleva

Batman Forever ..... 14:21 Ag 18
The Bridges of Madison County ..... 13:17 Jl 14
The Brothers McMullen ..... 17:22 O 6
Desperado ..... 17:22 O 6
Devil in a Blue Dress ..... 19:16 N 3
Dolores Claiborne ..... 9:20 My 5
Clockers ..... 18:20 O 20
Get Shorty ..... 21:18 D 1
Goldeneye ..... 22:17 D 15
Indian in the Cupboard ..... 15:18 S 8
Jefferson in Paris ..... 10:20 My 19
Little Women ..... 3:12 Fe 10
The Madness of King George ..... 5:15 Mr 10
Mighty Aphrodite ..... 22:17 D 15
Nobody's Fool ..... 4:54 Fe 24
Once Were Warriors ..... 12:16 Je 16
Pocahontas ..... 14:21 Ag 18
Priest ..... 7:22 Ap 7
The Scarlet Letter ..... 2020 N 17
Smoke ..... 15:18 S 8
To Die For ..... 20:21 N 17
Tom & Viv ..... 2:24 Ja 27
The Wild Bunch ..... 8:17 Ap 21

Media, by Frank McConnell

Who's on first ..... 1:13 Ja 13
The values thing ..... 5:17 Mr 10
Epic comics ..... 18:21 O 20
Frank Sinatra's birthday ..... 22:18 D 15

Stage, by Marian Burkhart

Night Seasons ..... 1:19 Ja 13
Talking Pictures ..... 1:20 Ja 13

Art, by Paul Elie

Andres Serrano in view ..... 11:18 Je 2

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